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CHILDREN OF GOD

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Preachers of the Age

EDWARD A. STUART

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CHILDREN OF GOD

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

EDWARD A. STUART

VICAR OF ST. JAMES'S, HOLLOWAY

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THE PALACE PEACEABLE.

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“Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord ; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in Him ; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”—Ps. xxxvii. 1-7.

READING these first seven verses yesterday, an allegory rose before me. I saw a plain. Wild beasts prowled on every side, and men far worse than beasts, and self, the worst of all. Sin reigned supreme. Here deeds of blood and violence and wrong, against which even my soul revolted. Here sin assumed a gentler guise : the wicked flourished as a bay tree, his paths dropped fatness, all around was prosperity and success. And then I envied him ; fretted upon one hand, envious on the other (ver. 1). I had no peace, and ever and anon the past affrighted me. Old sins rose up, long forgotten, but unconfessed, and made me blush, and stole again the colour from my cheek as I thought of what must be ; for the great reaper Death was moving all around me with remorseless scythe, and those who seemed a while ago most flourishing were in a moment withered and dried up (ver. 2). I had no peace,

chased by dark fears, fretted because of sin, envy gnawing at my heart, Death drawing near with judgment in his train,—I sought me where to hide, but every hiding-place was lighted with the lightning of God's wrath. I had no place to flee unto, no refuge for my soul.

At last I saw a palace rise right before me, like some strong fortress, calm and silent in its strength, looking down upon a battle-field—that hell on earth—where man doth slaughter his own brother-man; or like a lighthouse firm upon a rock, which, though the waves may roar and winds may howl, calmly sheds forth its light across the stormy sea. Its name was Peaceable. But could I enter in? Could I exchange the tumult of this sinning world for its calm rest and peace? Well, try I must; no longer can I bear the pangs within, the tumults from without. And so I took my way to yonder gate. It was a narrow gate. It seemed to me bricked up, impassable, and very, very low. To enter in I must have stooped, ay, even to the ground, and gone in upon my knees; and yet the Porter said if I would but stoop I could enter in at once, for the door was open, the gate was never shut. And as I stood without, debating if I would, He said, "It is only they who trust who enter into rest" (ver. 3); and as He pointed to the restless throng without, seeking rest, but finding none, He said, "These could not enter into rest because of unbelief. 'Peace through believing' is the watchword here." And yet I could not trust—at least, I would not stoop; and so I stood trembling with fear, with Satan's darts of unbelief and doubt wounding me in head and hand and knee. The refuge nigh, yet troubled in my soul. At last I said, "I must, I will;" and with a sigh I sank unto the ground, when, lo! the gate it towered o'er my head, it broadened,

heightened, became a royal portal, and I wondered I could have stood so long without, for on my knees what before seemed hard was easy now. I trusted in the Lord.

I entered in at once, and found myself within the courtyard of the palace. It was large beyond compare, and on every side the servants of the King were engaged in "doing good" (ver. 3). Their work was varied. Some did tend the sick, and some nursed babes 'midst sights and sounds which, if they had been outside the Palace Peaceable, would soon have sickened them, but not so now. And some went forth to distant lands and preached the gospel where it never had been preached before, and yet they never left the courtyard of the palace. And some I knew not what they did, so quiet was their work; but I did mark, where'er they came, the earth did bloom again, and all men smiled; and ever and anon there was borne upon the breeze, "Son, go work to-day;" "Wist ye not that ye must be about your Father's business?" And in that courtyard I learnt—oh! I learnt many things. I learnt within the Palace Peaceable "work never can bring weariness, for work itself is love." I learnt that faith must lead to work, for it was through yonder gate of trust I came into this busy scene of work. I learnt that in this Palace Peaceable it was possible to work in love; there were no jarring sounds, and envy had no place. Paul and Barnabas had ceased their strife; Miriam never murmured against Moses; and there was no Korah striving in unholy ambition to outshine Aaron. No intruding into other men's lines, but each and all they did the work which was appointed for them joyfully for the King, bearing one another's burdens, strengthening one another's hands, and rejoicing heartily in the success which crowned a brother's work. And I learnt, too, the

secret of successful work. I saw old Moses, his eye not dim, nor his natural force abated. He had given up murmuring, "I cannot bear it by myself alone," and he had learnt "the presence of the Lord it giveth rest," and he had cast upon Him all the care ; for it is not the work, but 'tis the worry that doth kill. And Joshua had left the Captain of the Lord's host to order the campaign, and gladly taken but the second place. For it is when through yonder gate of submission and of trust we pass into the courtyard of obedience, that then the peace of God doth garrison the heart and soul ; and so I found it.

And when the seventh year came round (cf. Exod. xxi.), a week of days, I hied me to the doorpost. I plainly said, "I love my Master ; I'll never go out free, but with mine ear now bored I'll hearken to His word, and serve no other lord." And then a blessed peace suffused my soul, and I knew the promise was most surely mine : "So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (ver. 3). Yes, all around the court the King He had prepared a banquet-room, and ever and anon He would come forth as that mysterious priest-king Melchizedek, and bring to us the bread and wine—rich feast !—the true Bread which cometh down from heaven, Himself our food ; and wine, which maketh glad the heart of man, His blood our life. Or as Bethlehem's farmer Boaz was wont to go and greet his servants reaping in the field, and invite the lowliest gleaner, "At meal-time come thou hither," and then would reach to her the parched corn ; so would He call us in—"Come ye yourselves apart, and rest awhile." And forthwith He would send us messes as tokens of His love, as Joseph did to Benjamin. Ay, we were abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thine house, and Thou didst make

us drink of the river of Thy pleasures ; Thy flesh was meat indeed, Thy blood was drink indeed. There was no want there ; in the Father's house there was always bread enough and to spare ; five loaves, when blessed by Him, would feed five thousand men ; the barrel of meal it wasted not. He prepared a table before us even in the wilderness, and man did eat angels' food. Therefore I learnt to have perfect peace, for my God did abundantly supply all my need.

But hark ! what strains of music burst upon mine ear ! Harpers harping on their harps ; the singing of an angelic choir. Here, come with me ; we are only yet in the outskirts of the Palace Peaceable. Passing through the banquet-room, we enter the concert-room of praise ; for peace doth lead to joy. " Delight thyself also in the Lord ; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart " (ver. 4). How shall I describe the scene ?—joy suffusing every face. Some are recounting with gratitude what the Lord hath done for their soul ; others what great things He hath done for sinners through their hands ; and there is indeed joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners repenting and returning to the fold. But at last my head began to swim : I know not why, unless it be the flesh was too weak to stand the delirium of delight, the earthen vessel was too frail. But sure it was that even then, though conscious of the joy to which I now had access, a darkness crept across my soul. I scarcely knew the cause ; in fact, I had no time to put the feeling into words, for straight a summons came to me to come into the King's own private room : so sure the promise is, " Before they call, I answer them." I never felt so close to Him before ; I even thanked the cloud which led me to that chamber, for dark though the entrance was, it was lighted with the sunshine of His face, and I felt

closer drawn to Him than e'en amidst the choir of angels, or in the banqueting-room itself; for here I was alone with God. "Come, tell me all, My child," He said—"what is the gloom, the care, the sin; commit it all to Me (ver. 5). Trust Me implicitly, just as once you did; it will all come right." And I rolled it all upon the Lord, and poured out my complaint—my cares, my griefs, my sins, my failures, and my doubts; my longings for the future, for victory over sin, to be more useful in the service of my Lord, and to behold all, all whom I loved, all one in Christ. And having told it all, I sat me at His feet and listened, like Mary, to His words of peace.

At last He said, "Come, child, lie down; here is the chamber I have prepared for thee." With that He lit a candle, that "He would bring forth my righteousness as the light, and my just dealing as the noonday" (ver. 6). And then I found myself in the bedchamber of Peace, in the very centre of the Palace Peaceable, and the peace of God was garrisoning me on every side; and ere I fell asleep, I looked back and wondered I had stayed without so long, amid all the fretting, envying tumult of the world, and why I had not entered in before by the postern gate of trust in God. Oh, if I had but known the rest in service, the joy of lying on His breast at supper, the joy unspeakable which He gives, and then the quiet communings with my Lord alone, I would have entered long ago! And so I laid me down and slept, and rested peacefully in the Lord.

UNITY OF PLAN IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT.

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“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.”—
2 TIM. iii. 16.

I HAVE long thought that the fragmentary reading of Holy Scripture is largely responsible for the want of interest which many have to confess they have in the Word of God. Read your Shakespeare as you read your Bible, and you will probably come to the same conclusion, namely, that there are some very good passages in the book, but that you have failed to see any purpose running throughout the volume. Of course you have, when you read a psalm to-day and a favourite chapter in St. John to-morrow. There is only one place at which you can begin to study the Bible—the first verse of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis; and there is only one place where you can leave off—the last verse of the last chapter of the Revelation of St. John. The Bible is not a birthday text-book, nor even sixty-six tracts bound up in the same cover, but a book with a unity of purpose, inspired by one Author—God the Holy Ghost. And yet for many Christians, if you bind up the Psalms, the Gospels, a few of the Epistles, and some of the chapters of Isaiah, you would have a Bible which would satisfy all their requirements.

Now, to-day I propose that we should take a bird's-eye

view of the Old Testament Scriptures, and see if we can discover any line of thought running throughout them. I can but hope to be suggestive ; it is impossible, of course, to be exhaustive. We will follow the order of the books as given in the English Canon, without apology and without attempting to explain how they fell into that order. It is the order in which the consciousness of the Catholic Church has placed them, I believe under the distinct guiding of God the Holy Ghost.

The most cursory glance will show us that the Old Testament is divided into four parts—the Pentateuch, the historical books, the poetical books, the prophetical books ; and I may say at once that I regard the Song of Solomon as the climax of the whole ; all that precedes leads up to it, all that follows flows from it. It is a mountain summit where you may see Jesus only in His transfiguration-glory ; a Pisgah-height where the Moses of the Law gives up the ghost, and whence, gazing down the vista of prophecy, you may see the good land which God has prepared for His people. Or, varying the metaphor, I see the river of life, whose sources are in eternity, in the Pentateuch, dashing down the crags of Sinai and of the Law ; in the historical books, meandering through the broad plains of history ; in the poetical books, rushing through the narrow rocky bed of personal religion, until it flows into this lovely little Loch Katrine of the Song of Solomon ; and thence flows forth in fuller volume through the prophetical books, until it loses itself at last in the ocean of eternal love. In the Pentateuch God appeals to man's conscience ; in the historical books, to man's intellect ; in the poetical books, to man's heart ; and in the prophetical books He opens to him the future.

Let us now turn back to the Pentateuch, and examine each book more in detail.

In the Book of Genesis, amongst many other things, God appeals to man's conscience with the question, "Is it not true that, put man in whatsoever position you please, apart from God he always fails?"

Adam is placed in the garden of innocence, but he fails. Noah steps out on a renovated earth, but he fails. Abraham is called out into a new land, but he fails. Jacob is brought up tenderly and delicately at home, but in spite of glorious promises he fails. And tell me, Conscience, is it not true that, be the circumstances what they may, man without God always fails?

Therefore, in the Book of Exodus, conscience must agree that, if man is to be saved, the salvation must come from outside himself. In Exod. i. you have Israel as a nation of slaves, persecuted and oppressed. In Exod. xl. you have Israel free and powerful and united, all encamped in the wilderness, with the tabernacle in the midst. What has effected the marvellous change? God. "I have seen the affliction of My people, . . . and I am come down to deliver them" (Exod. iii. 7, 8).

Now, tell me, Conscience, if this be true, if God has thus delivered His helpless people, what must be the first result? Conscience surely replies, "Gratitude, and a desire to worship God." The Book of Leviticus teaches me how to worship God—with reverence and with godly fear. The next desire will be to obey Him, and to walk worthy of my high calling. The Book of Numbers points me to my Guide, warns me against the dangers of the wilderness, and gives me directions for my way. My next desire will be to learn more of God. The Book of Deuteronomy follows, teaching me

line upon line, precept upon precept. "All Thy saints are in Thy hand; and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words" (xxxiii. 3). This book consists of four great sermons, in which Moses bids them look back on the past history of their nation, and in which he teaches them the good and right way.

Having thus appealed to man's conscience, in the historical books God appeals to man's intellect, and he is bidden to survey human history, and see whether it is not always well with them who fear the Lord, and ill with those who reject Him.

The historical books, for the most part, run in pairs, in which the positive and the negative side of this truth is put before us. In Joshua and Judges, God is brought before us as the Deliverer, and we are asked to examine the history of the children of Israel from this point of view. In the Book of Joshua, where God is regarded as the Captain and the Saviour, they advanced from strength to strength, until Joshua is able to confess (xxiii. 14), "Not one thing hath failed;" but in the Book of Judges, where every man did that which was right in his own eyes, there was disaster after disaster, from which they were only delivered by the direct interposition of God. The Book of Ruth forms a beautiful little parenthesis, showing how, even in the most abandoned times, true religion may be preserved if only in a beggar's family.

In 1 and 2 Samuel, God is regarded as the King. In 1 Samuel you have the man-chosen king, Saul. "Israel have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them," is the complaint of God against His people in 1 Sam. viii. 7. And Saul is appointed, and at first promises most successfully; but the book closes by showing us Israel routed, Saul

slain upon Mount Gilboa, and hardly a rod of land left to the people of the Lord on the western side of Jordan. Then it is that the God-chosen king, David, in 2 Samuel, ascends the throne, and slowly but surely wins back the dominion, until upon his death-bed he bequeaths to his son Solomon a kingdom second to none in the then known world. Say, is it not well with them who obey the God-appointed king?

Next, in 1 and 2 Kings, we are asked to trace the history of those who revere and those who despise God's prophets. It is Nathan (1 Kings i. 11, 23) who obtains the kingdom for King Solomon. The seed-plant of Solomon's greatness is discovered in that midnight communing with Jehovah (iii. 5, etc.). It is Ahijah who promises the kingdom to Jeroboam (xii. 29). The history of Shemaiah, the man of God from Judah, Jehu the son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah, are brought before us with great fulness, that we may learn that when we hearken unto God's Word we prosper; when we refuse to hear, then we fail.

In 1 and 2 Chronicles the same period of history is examined, but from a different point of view—namely, the reverence which different kings showed, or neglected to show, for the public worship of God. Those kings who revered the temple of the Lord, as David, Solomon, Asa (2 Chron. xv. 8-18), Jehoshaphat (xx. 5), Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah, prospered; but those who desecrated or despised the temple failed, *e.g.* Asa in his old age (2 Chron. xvi. 2), Joash in his later years (xxiv. 21), Uzziah (xxvi. 19), Ahaz (xxviii. 24), Manasseh (xxxiii. 4).

In the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah we pass into post-captivity times, and we learn from history that even when a nation has so grievously failed as Israel had done, there

was still hope of restoration, only there must first be the religious and moral reformation in Ezra before there can be the national restoration in Nehemiah. And the historical books close with the very important Book of Esther.

Hitherto the historical books have been dealing exclusively with the children of Israel; Jerusalem has been the centre of our thoughts; and any one might object, that no doubt it was true for Israel that when they obeyed God they prospered, when they disobeyed they fell—no reasonable man with their history in his hands could gainsay it—but were not Israel in a peculiar relationship to God? Are we bound to believe that it is universally true that obedience to God is the pathway of safety for the individual or for the nation? The Book of Esther here comes to our assistance; we are transferred to a distant land, the court of a heathen king. God is not recognized; His name is not even once mentioned throughout the whole book; and yet you cannot but perceive that His is the hand which, though concealed, is moving all the pieces on the chessboard, and that God rules not only in Jerusalem but in Shushan, and that it is always eventually well with those who fear the Lord.

The Pentateuch having now dealt with those requirements of the human soul to which conscience has borne witness, and the intellect having been convinced by the historical books that it is well to fear the Lord, we come in the poetical books to personal religion. The soul is now brought face to face with God, and we have the personal possessive pronoun in almost every line—"God is my God," "my Rock," "my Refuge."

In the Book of Job I learn my own individual sin. Although I dare not adopt such a rough-and-ready way of dealing with the mysteries of life as to maintain that suffering

always argues sin, yet I have brought before me here an aged patriarch, upright and sincere, and although Job is able to prove his integrity against the suspicions and suggestions of his friends, when he sees God in chap. xl. 4, he can but say, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee?" And remember, the man who makes this humble confession of his weakness and his sin, is one who is able to repel all the grievous charges his fellow-men bring against him. Having been humbled in the Book of Job, we can now accept God as our own personal Deliverer in the Book of Psalms. What gives its charm to this book is the variety of circumstances in which the poet-king found himself during his eventful life, and in each of which he found God to be his Shepherd, his High Tower, or his Refuge. You may be called upon to pass through the deepest depths of Christian experience, but you are sure to find David has been there before you, and has left for the encouragement of your faith, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." If this be so, I shall desire to walk worthy of my high calling; and the Book of the Proverbs furnishes me with a directory for my daily life in the home, in the street, in the market, or in society. With the Proverbs in my hand, I cannot decline far from the paths of righteousness.

And now we come to that strange little Book of Ecclesiastes, of which the burden is that solemn refrain, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" And yet this is the verdict of one who has all that heart can wish. Wealth, pleasure, wisdom, dominion, lay in profusion at the feet of Solomon; and not only so, but he had built the most gorgeous fane the world has ever seen, and instituted the most elaborate worship man could ever yield, and in spite of all, religion included, he declares, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!"

And yet, dear friends, strange as it may appear, I am convinced that thousands of Christians are in this Book of Ecclesiastes. Their conscience bears witness to the truth of God's declarations in the Pentateuch; their intellect is persuaded that it is well with those who fear the Lord; they are convinced of their own weakness and their sin; they have found Christ to be their Saviour, a very present Help in time of trouble; they do now strive to follow in His footsteps and obey His laws; and yet, if they were honest, they would be obliged to confess that they are not satisfied. And why? Because the human heart must have a heart to beat in sympathy with itself, and not until the Song of Solomon bursts upon us with its glad *εὐρήκα*, "I have found Him whom my soul loveth," will the heart have perfect peace. Oh, my dear friends, have you found Him a living, personal, ever-present Friend? Nothing else can truly satisfy. You may have an intellectual apprehension of Christianity—nay, you may have a thorough conviction of your need, and a perfect trust in the promises of God; but unless you know Christ as a living, personal Friend, you cannot have true peace. But when you have reached this height, then in the prophetic books the future is spread out before you, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;" and gazing down the avenue of the prophets, the Lord will not hide from you those things which He is about to do; but, in spite of sin, failure, and rebellion, you will see the purposes of God remaining true, until, in the last chapter of the last of the minor prophets, you see the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings, and you wait on the tiptoe of expectation for the opening of the New Testament, when the Dayspring will arise, and the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

UNITY OF PLAN IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT.

UNITY OF PLAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling.”—JUDE 24.

UPON Sunday last we attempted to trace some lines of thought running throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. To-day I would ask you to turn to the New, and see if we can trace any line running through the second part of the inspired volume. We at once see that the New Testament is also divided into four divisions—the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation. You may liken the whole Bible to a temple. In the Old Testament the foundations are wisely and strongly laid; in the Gospels the walls are upreared foursquare, firm and strong; in the Acts the invitation is given to all nations to enter in; in the Epistles the furniture of the temple is described, and the rules of conduct are laid down for those who would enter its sacred courts; and in the Revelation we see the whole congregation bowing low in worship before the Lord great and terrible, and in His temple doth every whit say “glory.” And inasmuch as we believe the Bible is an organism and not a manufacture, you may liken it to a tree. In the Old Testament you have the roots hidden in the darkness, over which men oftentimes stumble in their blindness, but which nevertheless are essential for the life

and stability of the tree; in the Gospels you have the trunk or stem in the humanity and work of our Lord Jesus Christ—it is to this we fly in the hour of danger and in the time of need; in the Acts and in the Epistles we have the boughs and branches of the tree extending in every direction, and, alas! sometimes, as foretold, the fowls of the air make their nests in the branches thereof; and in the Revelation you have the leaves and the fruits—the final end for which the tree exists.

It is now our duty to examine these four divisions more in detail.

I. The Gospels.

St. Matthew writes the life of Jesus Christ as the King—the Messiah who fulfils the predictions of Old Testament prophecy. He commences by tracing back His genealogy to David, the great King of Israel. He shows us the wise men from the East seeking, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” bids us listen to the proclamation of His forerunner, John the Baptist, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;” and then describes the victory of the King, first over the great enemy, Satan, and then over the hearts of men.

The second division of the Gospel, which gives us the pattern of the kingdom, commences with the proclamation of the King in the Sermon on the Mount; and in the eighth and ninth chapters we have an illustration of the beneficence of His reign, in the healing of the sick, the control of the powers of nature, and in the reception of the despised and of the outcast. In the tenth chapter He sends forth His forces to bring men back to allegiance and to loyalty, and further explains in chaps. xi.–xiii. the nature of His kingdom, and corrects certain mistakes which

have been made concerning it; but, in spite of His goodness and His love, in chaps. xiv.-xvi. the opposition deepens, and the second part closes with the undoubted enmity of the high priests and Pharisees.

The third part commences with His transfiguration, and then you have the esoteric teaching of the King for His own immediate society, in which He enjoins especially humility and love. In chap. xxi. you have the entry of the King into His capital, the last conflict with His rebel subjects, His apparent defeat when He is rejected by His people, His claims derided, and Himself crucified. But on the third day He rises from the tomb, confounds His foes, and ascends His throne with the declaration, "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations." It is a glorious Gospel, this Gospel of the kingdom, and worthily takes its place as the first book of the New Testament Scriptures.

St. Mark describes our Lord as the Servant, always active, always occupied, always about His Father's business. We must not stay to analyze it, but the word *εὐθείως*, "straightway," gives us the key-note to the busy life herein recorded. In St. Luke we have the Gospel of the humanity, written more especially for the Gentiles. It is the Gospel of catholicity and of free grace. It is the Gospel of the child, the woman, the publican, and the sinner. It is the Gospel of love on the part of Christ, the Gospel of prayer and submission to His Father on the part of Jesus. St. John's is the Gospel of the Deity. Tempting as it is to dwell on these holy pages, we must postpone the analysis of this Gospel for another time, and only draw attention now to this foursquare rock of our salvation. How firm

and stable doth it stand—a firm tower in every time of temptation and of danger! For the Gospel of St. Matthew, we might adopt the motto, “Behold your King.” For the Gospel of St. Mark, “Behold My Servant.” For the Gospel of St. Luke, “Behold the Man.” For the Gospel of St. John, “Behold your God.”

2. In the Acts of the Apostles the invitation is given to every land to come to Jesus. Beginning at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, the message is carried by Philip to Samaria, by Peter to Joppa and Cæsarea, and by Paul to distant lands, until, in the providence of God, he is brought to Rome itself, and preaches the gospel, though in bonds, in the metropolis of the world.

3. We then come to the Epistles, in which we have the more esoteric teaching of Christianity; and, first of all, the Epistles of St. Paul to the seven Churches of Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, Thessalonica.

The Epistle to the Romans stands first, as the great fundamental Epistle, in which the apostle, as from a professor's chair, explains the foundation truths of the Christian religion. He begins by insisting that all have sinned. The Gentile (chap. i.) and the Jew (chap. ii.). “Therefore there is no difference: all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (iii. 23). But salvation has been provided by God through the blood of Jesus Christ (iii. 25, 26); and this is to be accepted simply by faith—the same loving trust in God which justified our father Abraham. Being thus justified by faith, we have peace, and joy, and hope, and love, in addition to eternal life.

An objection is raised in chap. vi. because of the supposed immorality of the doctrine of free grace. Surely it will prove an incentive to sin? Impossible, saith the

apostle; this faith implies a death to the old life, a resurrection to the new (vi. 3-15). It implies a change of masters (vi. 16-23) and a change of love (vii. 1-6), which latter the Law itself could not effect, but Jesus Christ can, and doth. In chap. viii. you have a summary of the privileges of this salvation, commencing with "no condemnation" in the first verse, and closing with "no separation" in the last; but in chaps. ix.-xi. warnings are drawn from the history of the children of Israel, lest we should grow careless and presumptuous, and imagine that privileges in themselves imply salvation; and the Epistle closes in chap. xii. with an earnest exhortation to yield ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, and with rules of conduct, so that we may walk worthy of our Christian calling, both as members of the Church and as citizens of the State.

Having thus learned in the lecture-room of the Romans the first principles of our faith, we descend in Corinthians and Galatians into the arena of conflict and of strife. The two perpetual foes of the religion of Jesus Christ, worldliness and superstition, are met and overcome.

In Corinthians it is worldliness. Corinth, the most beautiful city in the world, the "eye of Greece," is pre-eminently a type of the world. Its two harbours, crowded with shipping both from East and West, ministered to its luxury and its wealth. Philosophers teaching in its porticoes amused its leisured classes with useless disputations. The Isthmian games periodically celebrated outside its walls drew together the profligate and the pleasure-seekers. So abandoned was the town, that to "Corinthianize," amongst the Greek authors, meant to play the wanton. But Paul marched against this Vanity Fair, as David against Goliath, with but his sling and with his stone: "For I determined

to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified ;” and though the conflict was sharp and bitter, and the leaven was felt even in the Church itself, the victory was certain, and angels beheld with wonder a Church in Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus.

In Galatians we meet with the other foe—Jewish legality and superstition. The contest is more severe, and the language of the apostle more caustic. The Galatians were going back to the beggarly elements, instead of standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.

The thunderstorms of controversy having cleared the air, we now sail into smoother waters, in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle begins, in chaps. i., ii., enumerating the Christian’s privileges—seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Chap. iii. is a parenthesis, in which he vindicates his apostleship and the catholicity of his message. In chaps. iv. 1–vi. 9 he exhorts them as to their Christian walk—first (iv. 1–16), as members of the Church ; secondly (iv. 17–v. 21), as regards their private life ; thirdly (v. 22–vi. 9), as regards their social relationships. And he concludes (vi. 10–end) by reminding them this Christian’s walk is no peaceful procession through a conquered land, but that it implies warfare and struggle, and that therefore they must take unto themselves the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand in the evil day.

The Epistle to the Philippians brings before us the inner heart-life of the true Christian, and its four chapters have been thus beautifully summarized :—

Chap. i.—The gospel mind, and Christ the Life. His one desire is that Christ may be preached (ver. 18), and the secret of this is that the motto of His life is, “To me to live is Christ” (ver. 21).

Chap. ii.—The humble mind, and Christ the Example.
 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who . . . humbled Himself” (vers. 5–8).

Chap. iii.—The earnest mind, and Christ the Object.
 “I count all things but loss for . . . Christ Jesus my Lord.”

Chap. iv.—The peaceful mind, and Christ the Strength.
 The peace of God garrisons heart and mind, for he knows he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him.

The Epistle to the Colossians brings before us rather the glory of Christ, the Head of the Church, as the antidote for all heresies, and the attraction for all our aspirations. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.”

And, lastly, in the Thessalonians we are told to wait for His Son from heaven ; but the Second Epistle adds, we must wait with patience—that with quietness we must work, and eat our own bread.

But an inquirer might be supposed here to interrupt : Yes, I see all this beautiful scheme of Christian truth and doctrine ; I see how this wonderful doctrine, as expounded in the Romans, overcomes worldliness and superstition ; I see that if the Christian would walk worthy of his privileges he must have his sword continually in his hand ; and I see the inner life which must actuate and sustain him ; and I see also the glory of the God-man, Christ Jesus, and I wait patiently for the fulfilment of the promise that He will come again. But in the mean time, during the absence of the Head, how is the Church to be governed and to be taught. Has no provision been made ? Is each man to do that which is right in his own eyes, because there is no King in Israel ?

The pastoral Epistles supply the answer. Jesus Christ has most certainly ordained a ministry for His Church during His absence ; and in 1 Timothy this ministry is charged with the discipline of the Church, in 2 Timothy is exhorted to be an example to the Church, and in Titus is responsible for the teaching of the Church, and therefore is charged to maintain "sound doctrine."

But a new difficulty might now be started. Our inquirer might say—I see how the Church is to be governed, led, and taught during the absence of the Head, Christ Jesus ; but what about the home-life of these people ? It is there that true religion must make itself manifest. We have seen them in the Church ; let us see them in the home. The Epistle to Philemon comes to our assistance. In that exquisitely charming letter almost every human relationship is exemplified and beautified. You see the Father, mother, and son, the master and the servant, the friend and friend, and you cannot help being struck with the extreme courtesy and confidence which ought to be characteristic of all the dealings Christians have with one another.

Another question might now be asked : But what relation does all this bear to the old covenant ? That, surely, was given by God ? Can I believe that that was entirely abrogated by the new ? By no means, saith the apostle. God did in times past speak unto the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken unto us by His Son. The old was good, the new is better. Was the old given through the interposition of angels ? The new is given through the Son. Moses, it was true, was faithful in all his house, but only as a servant ; but Christ is the Son over the whole house. Joshua was a great leader, but he did not bring the people into the perfect rest. Aaron was appointed by

God, but the Melchizedek high priesthood of Jesus Christ is far superior. The sacrifice He offered was a better sacrifice; for it was not the blood of bulls and goats, but His own blood. The old was but the shadow of the new; it was, therefore, not so much abrogated as fulfilled by the coming of the new.

Our objector might now maintain: This is all very well, but these fourteen Epistles were written either by St. Paul, or, at any rate, by those who derived their theology from him. I should wish to hear what the other disciples, *e.g.* James, Cephas, and John, "the pillars of the Church," have to say about these things. The Holy Spirit has spoken to us through just these three whom we should have chosen. The key-note of St. Paul's writings had been Faith. St. James says, True! faith; but it must be a faith which shows itself by works. St. Peter says, Faith, yes; but it is a faith which looks forward in hope. St. John, Yes, faith; but a faith which worketh by love. Each corroborates what has gone before, but adds some thought peculiarly his own. And then St. Jude closes these Epistles with an earnest exhortation to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints, and knowing that the heart might be tempted to be dismayed, and to ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" as it looked back over these Epistles and saw the glorious Christian life therein portrayed, St. Jude closes his Epistle by commending us to Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before His glory with exceeding joy.

4. We must not now linger over the fourth division of the New Testament, the Revelation of St. John. It is the climax of the whole. It shows us we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven; but when

we see the saints in glory, and hear the songs of the redeemed, we feel that the light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not to be compared with the glory to be revealed; and we raise our heads again, and go forward with lighter step and more buoyant heart, knowing that victory is ours, and that God still reigns, and that Christ still loves.

THE SEVEN GETHSEMANE
COMMANDS.

THE SEVEN GETHSEMANE COMMANDS.

“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.”
—MATT. xxvi. 36.

ONCE more let us go unto Gethsemane, and hearken whilst the Master speaks. Just as seven times He spake upon the cross, so doth He gently give seven commands under the shade of those olive trees. Let us recall to our remembrance to-day those words of Jesus Christ, and listen to these seven Gethsemane commands.

First, “Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder” (ver. 36). The Master would bid us here remember that there is something in His sufferings into which we cannot enter. For three years He had been training these twelve disciples. He had once and again separated three out of their number to a closer fellowship—Peter, so full of zeal; John, with the resting, waiting confidence of love; and James, with his readiness to suffer for the truth’s sake;—those three characters which always hold the closest communion with their Lord. But now He seems to say to them all, “Thou canst not follow Me now. Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations; but

now I must go forward alone. Hitherto, but no further. 'Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.'"

Ay, brethren, there is something in the work and sufferings of Jesus Christ into which we cannot enter.

There is something in the work. He must tread the winepress alone; of the people there must be none with Him. No one must be in the tabernacle when our Aaron goes in to make an atonement for our souls. The disciples might feed the multitude with the broken bread, or roll away the stone from the grave of Lazarus; but in the work of atonement Jesus Christ must be absolutely alone.

So in the sufferings of Jesus Christ there is much into which we cannot enter. It is right that we should study them and meditate upon them, as we do this day; but, after all, we must remember that there is much which we cannot know. Commentators have tried to understand this agony in Gethsemane. Some say it was the fear of death which now came upon the Lord; others that it was the sensitive shrinking from bodily suffering; others that it was a terrible despondency which swept across His soul, brought about by the power of darkness, who tried to dissuade Him from the cross because of its certain failure even in the case of His own disciples; others that He was beginning now to taste the bitter cup of Divine wrath for human sin; others, with more likelihood, as I think, imagine that it was the revulsion of the pure and holy Son of God in being brought into contact with human sin. As Ezra (Ezra ix.), though personally innocent, yet sat down astonished when He saw the sin of Israel, so was the eternal Son astonished at the sin of man. "An horrible dread hath overwhelmed Me, because men keep not Thy Law." But, after all, we must acknowledge that there are depths in the sufferings of

Christ which we cannot fathom; we can but sit outside whilst He goes and prays yonder.

The second command is in ver. 38: "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me." Yes, though there are depths in the sufferings of Christ which we cannot understand, and which we must be content not to understand, yet we are to watch with Him. Never, never can we dwell too much upon the sufferings of our adorable Redeemer. The very words used by the evangelists, as they attempt to describe His sufferings, show what He had to go through. In ver. 37 you have the word ἀδημονεῖν, as if He were distracted, or, as we might say, He was not at home, He was in a strange land. It was so terribly new for Him, the Prince of life, to enter the valley of the shadow of death; for Him, the ever obedient Son, who did always those things which pleased the Father, to come under the shadow of human guilt, and so feel the darkening of the Father's face against man's sin. In ver. 38 you have περίλυπος. You might almost picture to yourself a stag coming suddenly upon an open glade, and on every side the wolves glaring upon him; fear is upon every side. In Mark xiv. 33, you have ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι, an awful horror; and in Luke xxii. 44, γεόμενος ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ, "being in an agony," bringing before us the awful conflict through which He passed. And yet in the midst of it all He never forgot that God was His Father, nor was the avenue of prayer ever closed to Him. Let us therefore obey this command, and watch with Him, as we see Him in His unknown sufferings. Let us learn, first, the reality of the manhood of Jesus Christ; that He is very man as He is very God; that He felt intensely all those sorrows through which He passed; that He was touched by the feeling of our infirmities. In the second place, learn

the intolerable character of sin. See how the pure and holy Jesus shrank from being made sin for us—He who knew no sin. He knew what a hideous, loathsome thing it was ; whereas we, alas ! oftentimes speak and think so lightly of it. But dare we think lightly of it when we see how sin caused men to hate the holy and the true, and hounded them on to compass so cruelly His death ? Dare we think lightly of it when we see the agony of the Sin-bearer ? And, thirdly, let us learn the matchless love of Christ, who endured so much for our sakes, and laid down His life for us.

The next three commands concern more especially the great subject of temptation. Alas, alas ! we have not watched as we might have done ; we have slumbered and slept, and the Master knows how suddenly and how soon the tempter may be upon us ; therefore you have the third command in ver. 41 : “What, could ye not watch with Me one hour ? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation : the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Oh, brethren, the Master would never have us think lightly of temptation. “Lead us not into temptation” was one of the petitions He taught His disciples to pray from the very first ; and now here again He comes back from this great conflict with the evil one and saith, “Pray, that ye enter not into temptation ;” for however willing the spirit may be, the flesh is very, very weak. “Watch and pray,” therefore. Watch, as if everything depended upon you ; pray, for everything depends upon God. “Watch and pray.” Pray, for watching without prayer is presumption ; watch, for praying without watching is hypocrisy. “Watch and pray.” Watch against the foe without, and pray in the secret of your heart for power from on high.

The fourth command is in ver. 45, when He returned the

third time, and found them still fast asleep. Now He said unto them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest : behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Yes, sleep on now, for opportunities past can now never be recalled. Of all the words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ during that awful night, there are few which come home to us with more humiliating power. Their very irony wings the shaft ; at the same time, the remonstrance is so gentle and so kind. But even the closing words, in ver. 46, "Rise, let us be going," though they breathe into us fresh hope, yet contain a fresh stab for us, for they remind us of John xiv. 31, "Arise, let us go hence." What a trumpet-call was that command to us ! We were sitting with those disciples at the feast of love ; we were holding sweet intercourse with our blessed Lord, when we heard the call, "Arise, let us go hence." Hence, Lord ? Surely it is good to be here, sitting at Jesus' feet, and hearing His word ? Is not this the good part which Thou hast promised shall never be taken away from us ? True ; but "Arise, let us go hence ;" for this sorrow calls Me, this work calls Me. Yes ; hence from this feast of love to the slums of London, to the centre of Africa, to the millions of China. "Hence," to do our Father's will. "Hence," to watch with Me, to prove your love. "Hence," to meet the enemy, to combat all the powers of darkness. "Arise, let us go hence ;" for I will go with thee. Nay, if thou goest not hence, thou wilt lose My presence here. This upper chamber is but the preparation for the world's sorrow and the Father's service. "Arise, let us go hence." Have we not heard the call, brethren, coming to us from some devoted life, or from some cry of pain, "Come over and help us" ? This it was which led Hannington to give up wife and

home and country parsonage, to go forth to the centre of Africa. This it was which led Martyn to India, Elliott to America, and hundreds of Christian workers into the slums of London. And we too have heard the call; and we too have said, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." And we meant it; and we girded up our loins and started out. But now, alas! how slothful we have been! How bitterly have we been disappointed!

Or else the words came to us in another way. We are told by Josephus that the same words were heard again, just before the destruction of Jerusalem. There was the sound as of rushing wings from the inmost shrine of the temple in the holy city, and a voice crying, "Arise, let us go hence!" "Hence" from all this iniquity and sin. As erstwhile the angels hurried Lot from guilty Sodom, so flee now from the Jerusalem abandoned to destruction. And we too have heard the cry, "Arise, let us go hence!"—we young men, when the language grew more coarse, or the suggestions grew more vile. Yes, "hence." "Stay not in all the plain, lest thou be consumed." "Hence," poor giddy pleasure-seeker, lest your days be consumed in vanity. "Hence," ye indolent and selfish, lest your heart become stonier than the hardest adamant. "Hence," ye racers after gold, lest truth and honesty and probity be lost for ever. And we did arise, and we determined the future should be very different to the past. Perhaps it was under some startling sermon; perhaps it was after some dangerous sickness; perhaps it was under some crushing bereavement; perhaps it was at your confirmation-time. But, alas! how much has happened since that day! What shameful sloth, what cold neglect, what heedless forsaking of the Master!—and all this in

spite of the privileges we have enjoyed. I can fancy Peter saying, "I am not surprised at the eight sleeping—they had been left outside the garden; but that you and I should have slept, John! We, who had seen Him raise the dead; who had gazed upon Him in His transfiguration-glory, and who had been admitted into the inmost circle in the garden! Oh, it is terrible that we should have slept! Could we not watch with Him one hour? I said, 'I will go with Thee to prison and to death,' and here I have been fast asleep!" Ah! my brethren, we too have seen Him raise the dead; nay, He hath raised us ourselves. We have seen glimpses of His glory, and been witnesses of His Passion; and yet, in spite of our protestations and our vows, how slothful we have been! And it is not as if we had not been warned. He did warn us, most solemnly, in that upper room, and then afterwards, so kindly, after our first sad fall, when He bade us "watch and pray;" and yet we slept! And oh, how much we might have done!

"Backwards and forwards thrice He ran,
As if He sought some help from man;
He wished at least they would console—
'Twas all they could—His tortured soul.
Whate'er He sought for there was none;
Our Captain fought the fight alone;
Soon as the Chief to battle led,
That moment every warrior fled."

Alas, what an opportunity they had lost! He had said, "Watch with Me;" and though they could not enter into the inmost circle, they might have comforted Him. Oh, if He had found on his return Peter watching, James praying, and John following Him with tear-bedewed eyes, what a strength it would have been to Him, even though they had spoken not a word! We all know the power in the pressed

hand when the lips are silent, but the eyes tell that there is a heart which dares not intrude into our sorrow, yet still feels for us all the same. But now it is all gone, and they had lost the privilege of ministering to Jesus. Yes, you must sleep on now, and take your rest. Sleep on now, my brother. That young apprentice when he first came took a wonderful fancy to you ; you had only to ask him to go with you to the house of God, and he would gladly have accompanied you. But you must sleep on now ; the other set in the house have hold of him, and his Sundays are spent upon the river, and you will never get him now to darken the threshold of the house of God. You promised your old friend you would look after his son when he came up to town. How lonely his first Sundays were ! What would he not have given to have been invited to your home ! But he has been already six weeks in town, and you have never asked him yet. You will do so on Sunday next. No, you must sleep on now ; he has other invitations now, and is being rapidly drawn into the vortex of London life. That young servant whom you discharged yesterday—you found fault with her being so giddy, and you at once dismissed her ; but you might have watched over her, and kindly warned her. But it is too late now ; you must sleep on now. She would not brook a word from you now ; your opportunity is gone. You meant to have had a word of prayer with your boy before you sent him off to school, and to have warned him about the dangers and temptations of school-life ; but you were shy, and you put it off so long that there was no time, and now you will be surprised if your boy comes back for his first holidays scarred by the sins against which you might have warned him. Ah, this is heart-breaking work, when the disappointed Saviour says to His slothful servants, "Sleep on now."

But we may not leave you thus ; there is a fifth command in the very next verse (46) : " Rise, let us be going." Yes ! though the past can never be recalled. Fresh opportunities should rouse us to fresh efforts. Yes, thank God, there is another chance. We may be humbled by the past ; we should lament it and confess it ; but let it not paralyze us for the future. Let it only be a fresh incentive to work while it is day, and serve whilst yet we may.

The sixth command, in ver. 52, teaches us submission to the Divine will, and the abandoning of all human power. " Put up again thy sword into his place." Oh, when will the Church listen to this command, and put up its sword ! *Non tali auxilio*. Depend upon it, dear friends, when we draw the carnal sword we always strike off a servant's ear ; and yet there is always the temptation, when the truth, or the Church, or ourselves are in danger, to draw the sword. Some would draw the sword of controversy, and use sharp, biting words ; some would draw the sword of the law, and use the temporal power to promulgate spiritual truth ; but it always cuts off the ear. And sharp controversy and un-Christian lawsuits render your opponents still more inaccessible to the truth. No ! " put up thy sword into his place : for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Far, far better follow the example of Jesus Christ : " The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it ?" and, " Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray ?" Yes ! this, Christian, is your almighty weapon. " Put up thy sword into his place."

The last command you will find in John xviii. 8 : " If ye seek Me, let these go their way." It was spoken in the first place, not to the disciples, but to the representatives of the law who had come to arrest Him. It speaks to us first

of all most powerfully of the voluntariness of the death of Jesus Christ. No man took His life from Him. He had power to lay it down, and He had power to take it again. Yes, He gave Himself for us. You may hear Him say, not merely to the soldiers of the high priests, but to the Law of God, and to the executioners of Divine wrath, "If ye seek Me, let these go their way;" and so He became our Surety and our Substitute, and we are sheltered by His surrender of Himself to death. And then, shifting but a little the kaleidoscope of our thoughts, we can hear Him say to us, as we hug our idols to our hearts, "If ye seek Me, let these go their way." Yes, this is the proof of all honest seeking after Jesus; you must be willing to let all other things go their way. Brother, are you thus seeking after Him? All other seeking will be in vain; but if you seek Him thus, assuredly He will be found of you.

Listen, then, to these seven commands from amidst the shade of the olive trees of Gethsemane. Remember there are depths in the sufferings and work of Jesus Christ into which you and I cannot enter; but still we are to tarry and watch with Him. Remember also that you must not think lightly of temptation. Fresh from that last victorious conflict with the evil one, Jesus Christ comes back to us and says, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Remember, the opportunity once lost can never be recalled; and yet, thank God, fresh opportunities are ever calling us to rise and follow Him. But remember in all thy conflicts to put up thy carnal sword; thine all-conquering weapon, Christian, is prayer and submission to thy Father's will. And lastly, if you seek Him, you must let all else go its way. God make us obedient to our agonizing Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

THE SEVENFOLD EASTER
COMMAND.

THE SEVENFOLD EASTER COMMAND.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”
—MARK xvi. 15.

ON Friday last we were listening to the seven Gethsemane commands. Seven times, beneath the shade of those olive trees, did our King issue His behests, and deep and varied were the lessons that we learnt. To-day, upon this bright and happy morning, I would ask you to listen to the sevenfold Easter command of the risen Christ. But how different are its tones ! The seven Gethsemane commands had to do with suffering and temptation ; they exhorted to submission, resignation, patience, and to prayer. But the Easter commands call us to service and to work. Jesus Christ, having overcome death, now bids us go forth in the power of His risen life. True, Gethsemane must precede Easter, but Easter must follow Gethsemane ; true, we must watch, we must pray, we must surrender. And never, I fear, shall we here have so truly learnt these lessons but that we shall have need continually to return to Gethsemane and watch, and learn to follow our suffering Lord. But there is the other side to the Christian life, and the risen Christ bids us gird up our loins and sally forth, and the world calls to us out of its darkness and its sorrow. Up,

ye Christian soldiers! the giant is lying dead. Goliath hath been slain by his own weapon, wrenched from his cruel hand; for by death He hath destroyed death. Now, Christian, to the spoil, and with the victorious cry, "Africa, India, China, for Jesus Christ!" go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. This is the first, the great, we might almost say the only, Easter command. It is again and again repeated, but not once too often, as, alas! the lethargy of nineteen centuries doth testify. ~~It~~ ^{the} is addressed to all classes—to women as well as men; to the solitary Magdalene in the garden; to the apostles in the upper room; to all the disciples on the slopes of the Galilæan mount. Every Christian is to be a missionary, and to tell his brother-man that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and that there is pardon through His blood.

You find the command first of all in John xx. 17, given to Mary Magdalene: "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." You know the story. Mary Magdalene had gone to the sepulchre early, while it was yet dark, and found the stone had been removed; immediately she ran back to the city and told the apostles Peter and John. They ran to the sepulchre, and she followed; and though they soon returned when they found not the body of their Lord, she lingered at the spot. At last Jesus Himself appeared to her. At first she mistook Him for the gardener, but when He called her by her name, "Mary!" she turned and said, "Rabboni!" Then follows this verse, as she throws herself before Him and is about to embrace His knees: "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren,

and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

We cannot to-day enter thoroughly into the discussion about this interesting verse—into the reason of the prohibition, "Touch Me not," or the meaning of "not yet ascended to My Father," or the bearing of the message, "My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God;" all points of the deepest interest. Suffice it to say, that Mary was now suddenly in the height of bliss, and that her first thought was to hold Him and never let Him go—to attach herself (*ἄπτεσθαι*) for ever to her Lord. But Jesus Christ saith no—"Go tell My brethren." Leave thine own enjoyment, and go and tell; else will thine enjoyment be selfish, and be in danger of becoming simply sentimental. And so the command comes to us this bright, happy Easter morn, as we sing our gladsome hymns, and Nature herself rejoices with us in her springtime, in her resurrection-life. Remember there are others still in sorrow and in gloom; amidst all thy joy remember them, and go tell My brethren whom I so dearly love.

The command is repeated in Matt. xxviii. 10, to the other women who had come to anoint the body of Jesus, and who were now wending their way back sadly to the town. We feel at once there is a difference between them and Mary Magdalene, ^{she} Mary Magdalene affords us the highest example of sorrow and of love, therefore is she first ^{to reach them} at the rendezvous; when she sees the angels she shows no fear, so absorbed is she in the one thought about her Lord whom she had lost. But not so the other women. True, their love was deep; true, their sorrow was keen; but they came more calmly, debating, "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" And when

they saw the angels they were frightened; and when at last they beheld the Lord, they were fil'd with awe—so different to the impulsive “Rabboni!” of Mary Magdalene, and her earnest desire to detain Him for ever with her. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ said to them, “Be not afraid: go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.” Yes, Jesus Christ would send forth as His messengers, not only those who are filled with impulsive love to Him, but the calm, the calculating, and the prudent. You who see the stone and know the difficulties in the way, you who feel the awe and sacredness of these holy things, you go and tell, for we need your corroboration; for there are some who will believe your story, who will account Mary Magdalene, with her ecstatic love, but an enthusiastic fanatic.

In Mark xvi. 15 the Easter command is repeated to the eleven apostles. “Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Here the command is accompanied with reproofs. And ^{should we wonder} think you not, my brethren, remembering that there are still eight hundred millions of the human race who have never heard the gospel, despite the fact that nineteen centuries have rolled by since the command was given, ^{Spring} that if the Lord Jesus Christ appeared this happy Easter Day amongst us, ^{us} as we sit at meat, enjoying the good things He has prepared for us, He would not have to upbraid us for our unbelief, and for the hardness of our hearts? Thus, I fear, would the Easter command be given to us to-day, as He would point us

with saddened glance to the millions who are still unevangelized.

Last of all, the command is given in Matt. xxviii. 19, to all of His disciples. He is on the mountain in Galilee, where He had appointed to meet all His humble followers. The whole of the little Church was gathered now together—some five hundred souls in all. It was like a general reviewing his troops upon the eve of battle. True, they were but a handful; but they were to subjugate the world, and thus did their royal Captain send them forth. “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Yes, this it was which made it possible to obey this Easter command, hopeless as it would otherwise have been: “Lo, I am with you alway.” If it were not for the presence of the risen Jesus, how could we go forth and testify of Him? How dare I stand in this pulpit, or you bear testimony in the counting-house or work-room? How can the missionary go to the cannibal or the degraded? But “I am with you alway” guarantees to us almighty power, and this first great Easter command is possible, and, by the grace of God, shall certainly be done.

We have but time to mention, scarcely to study, the other six Easter commands of our Lord Jesus Christ. But they all have to do with this first great command, to go and tell forth the glad tidings of a risen Christ.

The second command you will find in Luke xxiv. 39: “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye

see Me have." And again in John xx. 27, to the doubting Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side ; and be not faithless, but believing." You see, the Master will not have us go forth to obey the first command without giving us first the power to thoroughly satisfy ourselves as to the truth of our message. Nay, we are commanded so to do ; and so we speak that we do know, and we testify that we have seen. How certain was the testimony of St. John (1 John i. 1) : "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ; . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." Ah ! dear friends, it is no use our going to preach to others unless we are sure ourselves. We want, in the present day, men who can speak from their own experience. The world is tired of conflicting opinions, and guesses after truth, and wants the solid rock of fact upon which to rest ; and it is only those who have been brought into personal contact with the risen and the living Christ who can possibly satisfy the want. Behold His hands, my brother, and see the print of the nails ; mark the self-denial which characterized every action of His life. Behold His feet, and see the self-denial of His walk ; and behold His pierced side, and see how His heart bleeds for the sons of men.

The third command is in John xx. 22 : "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." I think this breathing upon them must not be confounded with Pentecost. I think it was not anticipative of that great outpouring of the Holy Ghost, nor is it symbolic of the same, but quite distinct. I think it was rather the communication of new life than the com-

munication of new power. I would refer to Gen. ii. 7, when, in the creation of man, God breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. So here, in the new creation, Christ breathed upon them, and made them partakers of His life, the Holy Ghost. You will notice that whilst He breathed upon them, there is nevertheless a command—*λάβετε*, receive, take. They must not be altogether passive in this reception of the new life. Christ gives, but they must receive. And herein we have another glorious truth which we, as missionaries of the gospel, must never cease to remember. If the second command teaches us we must be intellectually convinced of the truth of our message, this command teaches us we must be essentially united to Him. We must have His life flowing through us, if we are to give the world the true idea of God's view of sin, and of God's plan of salvation; if, in short, we are to exercise aright that awful responsibility He has laid upon us of remitting and retaining the sins of the world around.

The fourth command is in Luke xxiv. 49: "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Yes, tarry ye even then — even when thoroughly convinced of the truth of the message, and even when you have received yourself the new life from the risen Saviour. Tarry ye, for even then you need power from on high. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Yes, Christian work is not a fanatical enthusiasm, not a feverish running hither and thither, but a quiet speaking, working, living in the power of the Holy Ghost; and for this there must be the training and discipline of a waiting-time, which seems to us sometimes disproportionately long. But Moses had forty years

in the backside of the wilderness before he was permitted to lead the children of Israel into liberty and joy; and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself had thirty years of retirement in the village home of Nazareth before He commenced His public ministry.

We pass now to the appendix to the Gospel of St. John—the twenty-first chapter—and we shall find three important commands with regard to different kinds of work. The first is for the evangelist, whose work is described under the metaphor of the fisherman. The disciples had gone out upon the Sea of Galilee to fish; but though they had toiled all the night, they had taken nothing; but when morning dawned a Stranger stood upon the shore, and asked them, “Children, have ye any meat?” They answered, “No.” Then, in ver. 6, you have the first of these commands to the fishermen: “Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find;” and now they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes. This, dear friends, is the first command we must ponder well if we would be fishers of men. We want implicit obedience to the Master’s command as to where we are to fish; we must allow Him to choose out our sphere for us. Philip must leave the crowded assemblies in Samaria and go down into the desert, and there, in obedience to the dictates of the Holy Spirit, join himself to the solitary eunuch of Candace, and the joy of his conversion will more than compensate for the disappointment in Simon Magus. Christian, are we thus ready to cast the net on whichever side of the ship the Master bids? Are we ready to let Him choose our sphere for us, and to join ourselves to whomsoever He bids us? Then we too shall find, and we shall have fewer disappointments in our Christian work.

The next command to the fishermen is in ver. 10 : "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." O fisherman, see that you obey this command ! True, your net may bring your fish nearer to yourself, or into the ship, or closer one unto the other ; but see that you bring them also unto Jesus. We thank God for the hallowed friendships of those to whom God may have used us. We rejoice when we see men and women drawn from the waters of a selfish world living together in unity. We like to see them in the ship of the Church ; otherwise they may fall back into the world and be lost. But, best of all, we want to see them brought to Jesus' feet, and be placed entirely at His disposal. "Bring them hither unto Me."

The last and most necessary command for the fishermen is in ver. 12 : "Come and dine." O Christian, see that you neglect not your own soul in the bustle of your work. "Come and dine," and let the Master feed you, and probe you, and send you back strengthened and refreshed to all your work.

But the evangelist's work is only part of that which Christ has left His Church to-day. There is also the pastor's ; and for this you have the sixth group of Easter commands in vers. 15-17.

The first command is in ver. 15 : Βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου, "Feed My lambs." This, O pastor, is the first duty the Chief Shepherd has laid upon thee. Feed My lambs, the little ones of My flock ; they need food—good plain nourishing food. Lead them into the pasture of My Word ; they can never thrive upon the husks of human eloquence or moral philosophy—husks which the swine do eat. Then next, in ver. 16, Ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου. Shepherd the young sheep when they become wild and headstrong, and are apt to

stray. They will need watchful care and loving wisdom, when the passions are strong, and the world is attractive, and the mind begins to require a reason for every prohibition, and a proof for every truth. Then, shepherd, then thou wilt find the most difficult part of thy work begin ; but leave not these young men and young women to wander at their will, but shepherd them and tend them. Lastly, in ver. 17, *Βόσκει τὰ πρόβατά μου*, "Feed My sheep." These are the older ones in thy flock. Their wandering days are over, but they need food. Life's sun is setting for them ; trials and temptations multiply, and the old Christian loves the Word. It cannot be too simple, but it must be true. With the waters of death approaching nearer, we want rocks upon which we may put our feet. And this, too, is the pastor's work. He must feed the children ; he must shepherd the young men ; but he must give the older Christian his portion also in due season. But all this requires love, earnest love ; love to Christ, and therefore love to the flock of Christ. Therefore, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

The last of the Easter commands is in ver. 22 : "Follow thou Me." Yes, once before, in John xii. 26, Jesus Christ had said, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me ;" and now He leaves us with this command ringing in our ears, "Follow thou Me." Behold, O servant of Jesus Christ, evangelist, pastor, or whatsoever thou be—behold thy Example, and "Follow thou Me." Ask not of others. "Follow thou Me ;" and following Me here on earth, thou shalt follow Me hereafter in heaven—"for where I am, there shall also My servant be."

THE SEVEN EASTER PROMISES
OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE SEVEN EASTER PROMISES OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid : go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.”—MATT. xxviii. 10.

ON Easter morning last we listened to the seven Easter commands of our risen Lord. To-day I would bring before you the seven promises of the Resurrection. The first two are in St. Matthew, and are contingent upon obedience ; the next four are in St. Mark, and are contingent upon faith ; the seventh is found in the Acts, and is the crowning blessing of them all.

The first is in Matt. xxviii. 10 : “Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.” It is the first promise of the risen Lord. He knew the first desire of their hearts when they heard He was risen from the dead would be, “Sir, we would see Jesus.”

In the first place, their unbelief would prompt them to utter this. He knew there was the Thomas-spirit in them all—“Except I see I will not believe.” The testimony might be very positive, might be corroborated by many witnesses, might be unassailable in point of fact, but He knew that all men believed the testimony of their own eyes

rather than that of other men. It was so even with the Queen of Sheba, that diligent seeker after truth, whom He held up as an example; who, when she had seen King Solomon, was obliged to confess, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me." Therefore, whilst reserving a special blessing for those who have not seen and yet have believed, our Lord Jesus Christ condescends to the weakness of their faith, and gives this promise, "They shall see Me," to conquer their unbelief, and to chase away their gloomy doubts.

But surely not only their unbelief, but also their love, would prompt them to desire first of all to see their Lord. Oh, to see Him once again, whom last they saw hanging crucified upon the tree; to see Him risen from the dead, living as a Conqueror and a King! What rapturous joy! What a heaven of bliss! And therefore, not only to confirm their faith, but also to satisfy their heart, Jesus promised, "They shall see Me."

But this promise is contingent upon obedience. See ver. 10: "Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me." No doubt there was a reason for the command. It was in Galilee that the majority of His followers were to be found; it was there, therefore, He would make His great appearance to His Church—that appearance mentioned by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv., when He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, when He gave them their marching orders to go and make disciples of all nations. But is this promise, "There shall they see Me," only for those first disciples? Is it not also for me?

Do I not want to see Him? Yes, even for me, upon this bright Easter morning, the promise rings out sweet and clear, "Ye shall see Me." Only go back to your daily life, your Galilee, in faith, and ye shall see Me; see Me as the risen One, see Me as the conquering One, see Me as the everlasting One.

The second promise is in Matt. xxviii. 20: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Here another great need of the soul is abundantly satisfied. He knows how every true Christian cries with Moses, "If Thy presence goes not with us, carry us not up hence."

"What could we do without Thee,
O Saviour ever dear!"

And therefore He promises, upon this resurrection morning, when the joy of seeing Him might be damped by the thought that soon we shall possibly lose Him, "Lo, I am with you alway." Now, this implies something more than the general presence of God in the world; upon that the teaching of the Bible is clear and unmistakable. God is everywhere; there is no place in heaven or on earth where He is not; no place in air or land or sea, no town or country, no spot in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America. "Enter into thy closet, and shut to thy door, and thy Father seeth in secret." Climb to the top of the highest Alps, where no insect moves or herbage thrives, and God is there; sail to the most remote island in the sea, where the foot of man has never trod, and He is always near thee, seeing, hearing, observing, knowing every action, every word, every whisper, every motive, every thought. "If I ascend up to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, and art acquainted with all my

ways." But the presence which Jesus Christ here promises is something quite distinct from this. It is a spiritual presence, which can only be discerned through the Holy Ghost, but which Christ promises, as in this passage, to His whole Church—that body mystical, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; that Holy Catholic Church against which the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail. And it is on account of this Presence that this Church lives and grows and flourishes; though crushed here, it springs up there. It is the bush which, though burning, is not consumed, because God is there.

This spiritual presence is promised also to every congregation of faithful believers, according to Matt. xviii. 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I"—by virtue of My resurrection power—"in the midst of them." What think you, brethren, that He will not come to the feast? Nay, right sure we are that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of us to-day.

And, further, this spiritual presence is promised to every individual believer, especially in times of trial. As He was the Fourth in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so, Christian, He will never leave you or forsake you. How faithfully, for instance, was it fulfilled to the Apostle Paul! See Acts xviii. 9, 10, "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee;" or Acts xxiii. 11, "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul;" or 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17, "All men forsook me . . . notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." And so it is always true: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through

the floods, they shall not overflow thee." And we may ever sing in the calm confidence of David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me." But here we may say this Easter promise is more especially to the Christian worker, and is contingent upon His engaging in the Master's work; and it is only when we thus engage that we can expect the promise to be fulfilled. But then, most assuredly, it shall, and Jesus Christ will be the Emmanuel in very truth—our God with us. When a dear cousin was going forth to the mission-field, one of his Bible-class children was heard saying to another how hard it would be to go and leave friends and mother and home. "Oh," said the other, "I don't think it will be so very hard; for Jesus, you know, will be with him."

The third Easter promise you will find in Mark xvi. 16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And, surely, He has this glorious Easter promise for us upon this His resurrection-day. For the thirty-three years of His human life, during which He had magnified the Law and made it honourable, were now over; that awful death by which, though innocent, He had atoned for our guilt, had been endured; and now, this morning, He had burst the bands of death, and had brought life and immortality to light. Yes, the risen Jesus says to the condemned sinner, tied and bound with the chain of his sins, "He shall be saved—saved from the guilt of sin; for I have perfectly fulfilled the Law, and My righteousness shall be imputed unto him, as every society is judged by the character of its representative; saved from the punishment of sin, as I, his Substitute, have died instead of him; saved from the love of sin—for, hanging upon the cross, I will draw all

hearts unto Myself, and he will experience the expulsive power of a new affection ; saved from the power of sin—for, as the risen Christ, I will anoint him with the power of the Holy Spirit from on high, so that he cannot do the things which otherwise he would ; and hereafter he shall be saved from the presence of sin, when he shall be admitted into My presence, where nothing that defileth can ever enter in." Oh, tell me, brother-men, is not this exactly what we want ? We want to see Him ; we want to be with Him ; but, alas ! this dark shadow of sin is always haunting us. And we want to be saved, not merely from the dread punishment of banishment from the presence of our God, but from the guilt of sin, the love of sin, and the power of sin. And this is what is promised to us here ; but it is contingent upon our faith, and upon the confession of our faith : " He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Just as you have it in Rom. x. 9, 10, " If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Yes, this is the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ. You must believe in your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ; that He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures ; that He is risen again for our justification ; and that He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and to pour out upon us His Holy Spirit. And then you must confess this in God's own appointed way—by baptism, typifying our complete separation from the old past life, and our perfect dependence upon the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit ; and so further runs the promise of the risen Jesus, " Ye shall be saved."

The fourth promise is in Mark xvi. 17—the promise of power: “And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.” The promise, you will perceive again, is contingent upon faith; and it is a promise of power over spiritual foes, and over natural disqualifications. Over spiritual foes, so that even devils shall be subject unto us. O Christian worker, therefore abandon not the hardest case. “Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, all things are possible to him that believeth?” Remember, He is set above all principality and power; that all power is given unto Him both in heaven and earth, and therefore thou too must, in the end, assuredly prevail. And power also over natural disqualifications. “They shall speak with new tongues.” The timid, shrinking Peter shall speak with boldness before three thousand men; and John, the hasty Boanerges, shall become the apostle of gentleness and of love.

The fifth promise, in the following verse, is a promise of safety and immunity from harm: “They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.” I have no doubt that the literal fulfilment of these promises might be exemplified from the lives of the immediate apostles of our Lord. But we have less interest in the legends, true or false, which tradition has preserved, than in the practical applicability of these promises to ourselves to-day. The Master promises to His disciples, on the condition of their faith in Him, perfect safety amidst the dangers of the work, so that what is harmful to others shall not hurt them.

And this safety will consist, not in the avoidance of evil, for the Master knew they would still be in the world, and

that temptations would be round about them upon every side. Therefore He does not promise immunity from danger, but immunity from harm. Yet this also, of course, only in the pathway of obedience. We may not throw ourselves from the pinnacle of the temple, and expect His angels to bear us up in their preserving hands, for we may not tempt the Lord our God ; but right sure we are that no harm can happen unto us if we be followers of that which is good ; that He doth give His angels charge over us, to keep us in all His ways ; that upon the highway of the Lord no lion shall be there. And is it not so ? Take, for instance, sceptical books ; and can you take up a more deadly serpent, or drink a more poisonous cup ? If you take it up simply from curiosity, or because the book is popular, and you covet the reputation of being liberal-minded, or up with the times, even if you retain your faith, the poison of that book will oftentimes sting you in years to come. But if you read that book because it is your duty, because you wish to expose its fallacy to some young heart who is being led astray thereby, then you may take up the serpent or drink the deadly thing, and it shall not hurt you. There are many, my brother, who know far better than you do what scepticism has written, who are yet strong in faith, giving glory to God, and the promise has been fulfilled to them. And so it is all through. This man enters into politics strong in faith, and in his desire to serve both God and man, and therefore walks erect amidst the pitfalls of public life, into which that poor miserable wretch, so selfishly ambitious, most miserably falls. This tradesman preserves his character unspotted and unsullied, because he is a man of God ; when yonder huckster's conscience is seared day

by day by the tricks of trade, until he grows so callous that evil ceases to cause pain.

The sixth promise of usefulness is to be found in the close of the selfsame verse: "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Yes, the blessing shall not end with yourself; others shall live by your life. You will only be helpful when you yourself are safe, and you will only be safe when you are helpful. Bring yourself into contact, my brother, with those who are sick and sorrowing, and you will know the exquisite delight of doing good. But we must lay hands upon them, come close to them, bring our personality into touch with them. You can never do good if you stand at a distance from your fellow-men. The risen Jesus has left you in this world as His representative, to heal the sorrows of the world, and works through you in conferring blessings upon the outcast and the sad.

The last promise is to be found in Acts i. 5—the promise of the Holy Ghost: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." This is the crowning blessing of the risen Christ. Without this all would be of no avail. If the Master is going, we must have the other Comforter, who will abide with us for ever. Wait, then, in prayer and patience for the fulfilment of this promise; for He will come, He will not tarry.

O Blessed Master, fulfil these Thine own promises unto us, we pray, upon this bright Easter Day. We would see Jesus, not so much to confirm our faith—for we do trust Thee—but to satisfy our hearts. Grant us Thy presence always, all the days, until the day we are ushered into Thine eternal presence in heaven above; and then grant that we may know what full salvation

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means, not only from the punishment, but from the power and love of sin. And give us power to cast out devils, first out of our own hearts, and then out of the hearts of others. And keep us from the evil, and make us a blessing to the world. And for all this vouchsafe unto us Thy Holy Spirit, for Thy great name's sake. Amen.

THE EASTER MEALS.

THE EASTER MEALS.

“And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.”—LUKE xxiv. 30.

THREE times over, during the forty days which intervened between His resurrection and His ascension, did our Lord Jesus Christ eat and drink with His disciples. And as many of us are looking forward, on this Easter Sunday, to drawing near to the Holy Table and holding communion with our risen Lord, it might be well for us to study these three Easter communions as they are recorded for us in the Gospel history.

The first is described in Luke xxiv. 30. Two of the disciples of our Lord, who were journeying to Emmaus, were joined that first Easter afternoon by a Stranger, who inquired into the reason of their sadness. They replied by relating the events which had happened at Jerusalem during the last few days, and of which their hearts were full. Then did the Stranger unfold to them the predictions of the Jewish prophets, who had foretold that the true Messiah must indeed suffer before He entered into His glory. But not yet did they recognize who their strange Companion was, until, arriving at Emmaus, they constrained Him to abide with them, for it was toward eventide. Then it was, when partaking of their simple evening meal, the Stranger

took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and the disciples recognized that it was Jesus.

The second meal is in Luke xxiv. 42, 43. From Emmaus our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Jerusalem, and appeared suddenly unto the apostles, and greeted them with His well-known salutation, "Peace be unto you." "But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. . . . And while they yet believed not for joy . . . He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them."

The third meal is in John xxi. 13. The disciples had been out fishing all the night, and had taken nothing, but in the morning dawn Jesus appeared unto them, and bade them cast their net upon the right side of the ship, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of the fishes they had caught; and when they had brought their net to land, they found Jesus standing by a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread also prepared, and the Master greeted them with the invitation, "Come and dine." And He took bread and gave it to them, and fish likewise.

It is scarcely necessary to point out the evidential value of these three meals. That is insisted on upon each occasion by the recording evangelist, and they were indeed a decisive proof of the reality of the Resurrection. Peter insists upon it in Acts x. 40, 41: "Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to

us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." And this was a testimony it was impossible to gainsay. The fact was, the truth of the Resurrection was so important, that evidence of its reality was offered to every sense. They *heard* Him, and they could not possibly mistake the voice of Jesus. "Never man spake as this Man." Besides, His sheep hear His voice, and they know Him. I think it was by His voice the disciple whom Jesus loved recognized Him at the Sea of Galilee. There was the same tone of sympathy and of concern that He had ever shown in His children—"Have ye any meat?" And so here, Luke xxiv. 36, when He said, "Peace be unto you." Who could speak those words as Jesus spake them? A holy calm spread over the very elements themselves when Jesus said unto the waves, "Peace, be still!" and the winds were hushed to the gentlest whisper. So also could He speak peace to the troubled soul. They might have recognized Him by His voice alone. They might have remembered His last legacy to them in John xiv. 27: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And they might have seen how now He was risen again to be His own executor, and to give them His peace which passeth all understanding. Again, how gently He upbraided them in Luke xxiv. 38: "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" How often had He addressed them thus! Cf. Matt. xiv. 31, when Jesus Christ said to Simon Peter, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" or Mark iv. 40, when He said unto the twelve, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" or Matt. xvi. 8, when He asked them, "O ye of little faith, why reason ye

among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?" No sooner had He spoken than they might have been sure that it was the Lord. But they not only heard Him; they *saw* Him. Cf. Luke xxiv. 39, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." They also *handled* Him, as St. John declares in 1 John i. 3: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."

But, above all, He did *eat* before them. No doubt there is much that is mysterious here. It could not have been necessary for Him to have partaken of the food, but as the angels ate of the provision which Abraham brought forth, so Jesus Christ ate before the disciples to confirm their faith. Therefore let us rejoice as we think of these three Easter meals, for they make the fact of the Resurrection so unassailable.

But they bring before us also another thought. What a proof do they afford that His delights are still with the sons of men! For eating implies fellowship. If we had not had these three meals, we might have missed a glorious truth. When we had been assured of the truth of His resurrection, we must have fallen down and worshipped; we should naturally have felt awe, as St. John was overcome by the sight of the risen Christ in Patmos isle. But we should have lost that holy familiarity which is our privilege to-day; nay, we should not have dared to

conceive that it was possible. And what a loss this would have been, in times of sorrow and of trial, when we feel the need of a superhuman friend whom we may approach with boldness, and of whose sympathy we may be sure! Those little frictions, which form so large a portion of life's troubles, but which are so little in themselves, and which seem still less when told in the ears of some unsympathizing friend,—how we delight to tell them in the ears of Jesus Christ, and feel sure that what is trying to us will never be trivial to our great sympathizing Friend! How we love those feasts! For they prove He is still the same Jesus who was ever wont to eat with publicans and sinners; that still He loves to associate with His people; and therefore we too, as the penitent, may approach and bedew His feet with the rain of repentant sorrow, and anoint His head with the ointment of our adoration; we too may lean our aching head upon His breast, and ask Him the questions which perplex our souls. Yes, for it is the risen Christ who invites us in Rev. iii. 20: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

But now let us examine these three narratives separately in detail.

The first of these Easter meals occurred at the close of His revelation of Himself to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus. It was in some respects the most unaccountable of all the appearances of our Lord. We are not surprised at the appearance of ver. 36 to His chosen apostles, nor are we surprised at the appearance in ver. 34 to Simon Peter, even though he had thrice denied our Lord; nor at the appearance to Mary Magdalene, for her heart was so

overflowing with love to her beloved Master. But that to these two unknown disciples—who, though they had heard the rumour of His resurrection, yet nevertheless had so little faith that they did not even stay to inquire into the truth of the strange rumours which were afloat—He should not only have revealed Himself, but that He should have devoted so long a time of that first Easter Day removing their errors, dissipating their doubts, establishing their faith, was at any rate remarkable. Then, at least, I learn there is hope for us. We are insignificant, we are weak in faith, we are oftentimes wandering in the dark; but the same Master who cheered them will abide with us, and chase away our sorrow, our darkness, and our doubt, with the light of His countenance and His love.

The second meal, in Luke xxiv. 42, was during His first appearance to the eleven—or rather to the ten; for Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. We are not astonished at this appearance; rather, if we wondered at all, we should wonder He had not appeared to them before. Perhaps they themselves were surprised that they had hitherto been passed over. Why had He appeared to the women, and to the two insignificant disciples walking to Emmaus, and why had He not appeared to them? Were they not His own chosen apostles? Were they not to see Him in His resurrection-glory? Oh yes! the Master was not unmindful of them, but He waited until they were all assembled in that upper room, hallowed by so many sacred memories; and then He appeared unto them, and spake unto them words of peace. And so we hope to have Him present with us to-night. We are gathered here in the Master's name; we have heard the glad news, "Jesus Christ

is risen to-day." What think ye, that He will not come to our feast? Oh yes, He will! But first of all He must appear to the individual, and then He will appear to the Church. He must first appear to the Mary seeking Him with tears in the solitude of the garden, and to the repentant Peter, and to Cleopas and his companion as they converse together in the way upon high and holy themes, and then He will appear to the disciples in the upper room; and perhaps one reason why we do not realize His presence more in the upper room is because we do not oftener seek Him in the solitude of the chamber, or speak of Him as we talk to one another by the way.

The third Easter meal was upon the lake-shore of Galilee. Here the scene was quite different. Everything was bustling; here men were dragging nets, and here they were disentangling and counting fish; and yet Jesus Christ is here also, taking an interest in their fishing, and providing for the bodily requirements of the tired toilers. So, after we have seen Him in the solitude of the chamber, and in the sanctity of the Church, we may expect to find Him even in the bustle of our daily life, sympathizing with our disappointments, guiding us in our successes, and oftentimes withdrawing us into the secret of His presence for refreshment and reinvigoration.

And yet once more I would ask you to notice the several results of these different meals.

In consequence of the first He was made known unto them, as they themselves aver in ver. 35, in the breaking of bread. And has He not oftentimes been made known unto us in the breaking of bread? Not only have we had His death more vividly brought before us, but as we have taken the bread we have realized our part in Him. As St. Paul,

in 1 Cor. x. 16, 17, declares, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body : for we are all partakers of that one bread." And as we have drunk the wine, we learn how alone we can live the life of Jesus Christ ; for, as He Himself declares in Matt. xxvi. 28, "This is My blood of the New Testament." Under the Old Testament the blood, which is the life, was shed, continually shed ; but it is expressly enjoined in Lev. xvii. 12, "No soul of you shall eat blood." But now, in the New Testament, not only is the blood shed for many for the remission of sins, but it is expressly commanded, "Drink ye all of this." Yes, the life shed is now given back again to us to be our Life, and flowing into us will enable us to live the Christian life ; and the risen Christ is revealed to me in all His resurrection-power.

The result of the second meal was the consecration to His use of the very best they had. True, it was not much—only a piece of a broiled fish, and a piece of an honeycomb ; but it was their best, and being willingly bestowed, it was graciously accepted. O Christian, let this be the result of this Easter meal to-day. Give Him your very best—your heart, yourself. Say not that it is unworthy of the Lord of heaven and earth. So it is, in very truth ; but if there be first a willing heart, it is accepted, not according to that which he hath not, but according to that he hath.

The result of the third meal was that He searched them through and through. And so it will be to-day. First of all He questioned them, not once, but thrice, about their love unto Himself. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" Next, by the thrice-repeated question, He reminded Peter

of his thrice-repeated sin ; and thirdly, He recalled him to fresh duties : "Feed My sheep, tend My lambs." So, Christian, would He question you about your love, remind you of your sin, and send you forth from this Easter Day to serve Him more faithfully and to follow Him more fully.

PROPITIATION, REDEMPTION,
RECONCILIATION.

PROPITIATION, REDEMPTION, RECONCILIATION.

“ Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.”—ROM. iii. 24, 25.

“ And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.”—ROM. v. 11.

I HAVE grouped together these three verses because they present to us three aspects of the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and because I think it is most important that we should get a clear idea of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. I am afraid it is not too much to say that a great number of so-called Christians have but a very hazy idea of what the Lord has accomplished for us on the cross. I think it would not be a travesty of many Christians' notions if I say that myriads consider and believe that some one—they have not quite made up their minds whether God or man—has done something—they are not quite sure what, except that it is in some way or other connected with the cross on Calvary—whereby some people—they have not quite made up their minds whether good or bad people—if they do something—they are not quite sure what it is, but they vaguely express it as doing their very best—then at some time or other—perhaps in

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this life, but more probably hereafter—they will obtain some kind of bliss, but chiefly freedom from pain and sorrow. I think you will agree with me that such a faith is an eminently unsatisfactory thing. You will not be surprised, therefore, if such a vague kind of belief produces very little gratitude or holiness of life, and if men, who have nothing more certain to depend on, live carelessly and irreligiously, you are not surprised that they are easily led astray by any wind of doctrine. Look at the three words used to describe our Lord's work in these three verses, and try and keep them as distinct as possible in your own minds. ~~I am afraid our English Bible, glorious as it is, has rather added to our confusion, because it does not keep the same English equivalent to the same Greek words, and these words, "reconciliation," "atonement," "propitiation," and "redemption," seem to be used almost indiscriminately in our English translation. But in the Greek they are always kept quite distinct. You have in chap. iii. 24 the word "redemption," and the Greek word is ἀπολυτρώσις. You have in chap. iii. 25 the word "propitiation," and the Greek word is ἱλαστήριον. And you have in chap. v. 11 the word καταλλαγή, translated wrongly in the text as "atonement," but rightly in the margin as "reconciliation."~~

Now, it is most important to keep these three things separate, because they are the work of different offices of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Redemption," in chap. iii. 24, is the work of the king. "Propitiation," ἱλασμός, from which this word comes, "propitiation" is the work of the priest. And the word in chap. v. 11, καταλλαγή, "reconciliation," describes the work of the prophet. You must therefore keep the three things quite distinct—the priest's work,

~~the king's work, and the prophet's work. At the same time,~~ And
~~if you~~ want an all-round view of the work of the Lord Jesus
 Christ, ~~you~~ ^{we} must combine the three, and then ~~you will~~ we
 have Christ's work—the work of the Anointed Prophet,
 the work of the Anointed Priest, and the work of the
 Anointed King. And I am quite sure of this, that God's
 people have not kept these three distinct, and that,
 therefore, we have so many mistakes in the present-day
 theology.

Let us look first at "propitiation," the word in chap.
 iii. 25. The word there used is *ἱλαστήριον*. Now, "propiti-
 ation" is the priest's work. If you turn to the Epistle
 to the Hebrews, chap. ii. 17, you come upon one of the
 unfortunate mistranslations. But the word there used is
 the word *ἱλάσκεσθαι*, "propitiation"—"Wherefore in all
 things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren,
 that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in
 things pertaining to God, to make *propitiation* for the sins
 of the people"—not *reconciliation*; that is the prophet's
 work. It is *ἱλάσκεσθαι*, the priest's work, "to make propi-
 tiation for the sins of the people." This word "propiti-
 ation" all through the Old Testament is translated "atone-
 ment." This was the priest's work. You have only to
 turn to Lev. iv., and again and again it occurs in that
 chapter. In the twenty-sixth verse, "The priest shall make
 an 'atonement' for them, and it shall be forgiven them;"
 the same word, *ἱλασκέσθαι*, in the LXX. And so all
 through that chapter. Look again at chap. xvi. 16, "And
 he shall make an 'atonement,'" or "propitiation," the
 same word; "he shall make an atonement for the holy
 place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel."
 You have only to take a concordance and look up the word

“atonement,” and you will see all through the Old Testament it is the same word in the Septuagint, and in every case it was the priest’s work. No one but the priest could make propitiation for the sins of the people. Nay, going a step further, before the priest could make atonement for the sins of the people, he must make atonement for himself—propitiation for himself. On the Day of Atonement he was to offer his bullock for himself, then the goat for the sins of the people. Therefore, whenever you think of the Lord Jesus Christ making propitiation, you must think of Him as a pure and spotless Priest—at perfect peace with God Himself—making propitiation before God. This is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ Godwards. He must make propitiation for the sins of the people. Whenever you think of “propitiation,” therefore, you must think of yourself as a sinner before God, as verily guilty in God’s sight, as one who has disobeyed God and forfeited the love and favour of your Creator. What is the offering that the Lord Jesus Christ makes when He makes propitiation? The Jewish high priest brought a bullock and made propitiation with the bullock. But not so the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 John ii. 2, you read, “And He is the ‘propitiation,’ ἱλασμός, for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” In chap. iv. 10, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He first loved us, and gave His only Son to be the ‘propitiation’ for our sins.” The “atonement,” therefore, the “propitiation” that He makes, is Himself. Now, where does He make it? He makes it in the holy of holies. In Heb. ix. 3-5 you have an account of the holy of holies, and there are seven things mentioned as being in that holy of holies. The last thing is (ver. 5), “And over it the cherubims of glory

shadowing the mercy-seat," the place where the "propitiation" was made. And all through the Septuagint the mercy-seat is called the *ἱλαστήριον*, the place where the "atonement" was offered when the priest made "propitiation" for the sins of the people. You remember how it was done. On the Day of Atonement—that day of propitiation—the high priest went into the holy of holies, and he sprinkled the blood of the goat upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat, and so he made "propitiation" for the sins of the people.

Now, my brethren, I want you to get a clear idea of this side of our Lord Jesus Christ's work. This is the priest's work, and it is rendered necessary because of our sin in the presence of God, because we are verily guilty before God, because we have committed that abominable thing that He hates; our iniquity rises before His pure heaven, therefore it was necessary that the "propitiation" should be made. And when the sinner comes confessing the heinousness of his sins, he prays as the poor publican prayed, "God be 'propitiated' towards me a sinner." This is the first aspect of the work of our Lord, this is the aspect of His work towards God, making "propitiation" for the sins of the people; because God's people had sinned against Him, therefore He must become the *ἱλασμός* for their iniquity. This is the priest's work.

In the second place, we come to the king's work. And that is described in chap. iii. 24 as "redemption;" and we have the word *ἀπολυτρώσις*, meaning redemption, ransom. I need scarcely go through the different passages. In Eph. i. 7, "In whom we have redemption through His blood." And so you have it here in this third chapter of Romans. Now, this side of our Lord

Jesus Christ's work runs concurrently with the first. As He makes "propitiation" towards God, so He carries out this great redemption work, this ἀπολυτρώσις. Now, the Hebrew word for this, which is always used in the Old Testament, is the word "gaal," which is connected with the word we know as "goel." You know what the Hebrew goel was. It helps us to understand the meaning of redemption. The goel was the next of kin of any Hebrew. Every Hebrew had his goel, who had, roughly speaking, four chief duties to perform. He had, in the first place, if his kinsman had lost his inheritance, to buy it back again. If the poor man got into difficulties in trade, and he was obliged to sell his little cottage to pay his debts, the goel came and redeemed him. Secondly, the man perhaps had to sell himself into slavery, and the goel must redeem the man from slavery. All this was called "gaal," redemption. The goel performed the duty of gaal. In the third place, if the man was slain, the goel was obliged to avenge him and slay his murderer. In the fourth place, if the man died without leaving any children, the goel was obliged to raise up seed to his brother. And the firstborn of the new marriage would be counted for the brother that was dead. These were the chief duties of the goel. It was, therefore, necessary, in the first place, that the goel should be a near kinsman. He must be next of kin. In the second place, it was necessary that he should have power. If he was a poor man himself, he could not redeem his brother. He must be strong enough and sufficiently able to avenge his brother's death. And in the third place, he must be willing to redeem his brother. Now, this was the work of a king; this is the mark of royalty. If you ever hear of a man acting as goel for another, it is at once

assumed that that man is in a superior position to the other; that he had powers and resources that the other man had not.

Now, my brethren, Christ is our Goel, and as our Goel He has redeemed us in all these ways. We have sold our inheritance; Christ has bought it back. We have sold ourselves into slavery; Christ has bought us back. We have been slain by the great enemy sin and Satan, and Christ has avenged our death. We were unfruitful; Christ raises up fruit for us. So, wherever Christ acts as our Goel, He puts forth His power and avenges us, and puts forth His resources and buys us back again. This "redemption," therefore, is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, not so much with regard to God for us—the work of "propitiation"—but with regard to sin and Satan.

Now, you have different illustrations of this in the Old Testament. Job says, "I know that my 'Goel' liveth"—7
 "my 'Redeemer' liveth." In Exod. vi. 6, God, speaking about the children of Israel, says, "I will redeem them from the hand of Pharaoh." So you have it in Ps. ciii. 4, "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction"—not "redeems it from God," but "redeems it from destruction." So in Isaiah, again and again, "He has redeemed us," "I will redeem thee from death;" Jer. xxxi. 11, "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he." There is the power of the king shown in redeeming and ransoming, and this is the figure which the Lord Jesus Christ uses in Matt. xx. : "Even as the Son of man, who came not to be ministered unto, but to give His life a ransom—a 'redemption'—for many." Now, if you study the New Testament, you will

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see that this word is always used very carefully in this sense. For instance, just two passages. In the Epistle to Titus (ii. 14), ~~read~~ "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us." What from? "From all iniquity." That is the work in regard to sin. So, ~~again, one other passage,~~ in 1 Pet. i. 18: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." "Redeemed!" What from? From your vain conversation in times past, from your vain life—that is what you have been redeemed from. Whenever you speak of redemption as having been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ, you look upon yourself as having been bought back from sin, from the hand of the enemy. You say, as St. Paul said, "I am not my own, I have been bought with a price; I am therefore bound to glorify God in my body and in my spirit, for they are God's." ~~This is the second part of the work.~~

Now, the third part of the work is the prophet's work. This is the work of "reconciliation," for which you have in Rom. v. the word *καταλλαγή*, and that word ought always to be kept for reconciliation. It means "a change." Now, the great passage for reconciliation is 2 Cor. v. 18: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This is the ambassador's work. The ambassador's work is recon-

ciliation—reconciling two nations that may be at enmity. Now Christ comes as our Ambassador, as our Prophet, as one who speaks for us. He finds God only too willing to be reconciled, waiting to be reconciled. He comes as God's Prophet, and He speaks out in God's name, and asks us to be reconciled. How did He do it? He did it by the cross. In Col. i. 20, "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself," And in the twenty-first verse, "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." Christ Jesus, having died upon the cross, reconciled God and man. On that cross He proves to us the Father's love. No one looking upon the cross of Christ can doubt now that God loves man. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son;" and Jesus Christ, coming and dying upon that cross, proclaims, as the great Prophet, "God is love; God is reconciled." He is stretching out His hand, and beseeching us, as God's Ambassador, "Be ye reconciled to God."

Now, a strange thing is this—that there is no Old Testament equivalent of that. There is an Old Testament equivalent for "propitiation"—the word "atonement." There is an Old Testament equivalent for "redemption"—the word "gaal," the work of the goel; but no Old Testament equivalent for this "reconciliation." This reconciliation is the New Testament work. Christ Jesus comes and tells us that God is reconciled. "Be ye reconciled." It was a ministry that could not be brought in in Old Testament days. It could be looked forward to in faith; it is a New Testament revelation. But it is based upon the

others. It is based upon "propitiation," and based upon "redemption."

Now, I am quite sure of this, that most mistakes have occurred because men see one or other of these sides of Christ's work and forget the other sides. In the early ages of Christianity, when men were always battling for right against wrong, their great thought was "redemption." You can quite fancy how the old fathers of the Greek and Latin Churches, observing on every side the royal work of Christ, looked to Him as King. They saw Him beating down His foes and conquering the devices of Satan. And therefore they, in the midst of the battle, thought chiefly about "redemption." If you read the old Fathers, this is the general view they take of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has redeemed us from sin and Satan and taken us to Himself—drawn us by the bond of the cross to Himself. Then, in the Middle Ages, when men were more contemplative, and sought to get down into the mysteries of things, it was "propitiation" that was generally thought of, and although the Middle Age writers go deeply into the subject of the "propitiation" of the Lord Jesus Christ, that aspect of His death which is Godward, they sometimes darkened wisdom by their learning. Now, "toleration" is the cry. Every one is right; it matters not what a man believes. And therefore, to-day, "reconciliation" is the great subject, and you hear of Christ coming to reconcile God and man; the thought of His "propitiation" is put on one side, and it is "reconciliation," bringing God and man close together, that is put forward.

Now, my brethren, what we want is to get all these three. If you want to get an all-round view of the Lord

Jesus Christ's work, you must keep these three sides of His work distinct, at the same time making out of them a golden strand that cannot be broken. You must think of Him as making "propitiation" first. It is an awful subject if you think of Him, the One Lone Man. There was no one to be with Aaron when he went in to make "propitiation" for the sins of the people, and there is no one who can ever stand beside Christ when He makes "propitiation" for our sins. Think of Him as He goes into the holy of holies—not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with His own blood—and there, upon that wondrous mercy-seat, He presents the "atonement" for our sins, the "propitiation" for our guilt; by that wondrous sacrifice upon the cross He has satisfied for ever the eternal justice of God. It is a wonderful thing. You and I cannot fathom it. You can only stand outside the gate and wonder. That "propitiation" is the great transaction between God and Christ. We have to stand outside. We have to close our eyes as we think of it. The Son of God is made a "propitiation" for my sin. O God, is that so? Is that so? Now, you must get hold of that fact. If you do not, you will think lightly of sin; but if you only get hold of that fact, you will make some mistakes, terrible mistakes. If you only think of Christ as making "propitiation" for us, you will think of God as a hard God, as a vengeful God, as a God who delights in blood, as a God who requires the death of His Son. You will think of God in that awful way, which is but a travesty of the gospel, as if God the Father was with a sword about to strike us, and the gentle Jesus stepped in between and bore the stroke instead. You must not only hold that Christ has gone into the holy of holies, and is there making "atonement"

for us, but you must also hold "reconciliation." You must see that God is a God of love; that while Christ is that "propitiation" for our sins, God the Father's heart has burst out towards us. You must listen to the Prophet saying, "God is reconciled, God is love, God is waiting for the sinner to redeem him." And, at the same time, you must hold the "redemption;" otherwise your life will not be a holy life; otherwise you will simply be looking at this from a theological point of view. Redemption brings it down practically to the daily life. Not only is Christ the propitiation for my sins, and the Prophet telling me that God is a God of love, but He has redeemed me from iniquity. I am not my own; I must say good-bye to all the filthy past. I am redeemed—redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. And you must remember that the death of Christ has redeemed you from sin, and not simply gaze upon the Priest busy about His work. But go back into your daily life and say good-bye to all the sins of the past. And, at the same time, you will listen to the Priest as He comes and tells you that that "propitiation" is necessary, that "propitiation" must be accomplished. But do not for one moment imagine that God only loves us because Christ died for us. Christ died for us because God loved us. And so you must take all three truths; you must weave them one into another. If you only have one, you have a one-sided view; but if you get all three, you will have at one and the same time the whole truth. As you listen to the Prophet, you will see that God is a wondrous God of love, the Father waiting to be gracious; as you look upon the Priest, you will see the abomination of sin, the heinousness of sin; and as you look upon the King, you will see that there is a power which

can bring you back from sin, which can redeem you from all iniquity, and a power which can ransom you from all pain and grief. God grant that we may get an all-round view of the redemption in Christ, and that we may give to Him the praise of a ransomed and redeemed soul !

CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS.

CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS.

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”—I COR. xv. 3.

How are we to approach the death of our Lord Jesus Christ? There are some who tell us it is simply the greatest manifestation of the love of God, but that any idea of a sacrifice for sin must be rigorously excluded therefrom; that we make too much of His death; that it is only the accessory to His life; that the Incarnation is far more important than the Crucifixion, and that Christmas is a far greater festival than Easter Day; that such expressions as “Christ died for the ungodly,” or “He Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” must now be explained away. For the old-fashioned evangelical doctrine is discredited now in this nineteenth century, and unless we are prepared to modify our teaching, and accept the conclusions of a higher criticism, and bow to the demands of an educated reason, we are in danger of driving all intellectual men into unbelief, and religion, exploded now for all thinking minds, will become the heritage of women and of those who are intellectually imbecile. To all this we make the following replies:—

In the first place, we remember St. Paul said (1 Cor. i. 26-29), “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many

mighty, not many noble, are called : but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence ; ” and a greater than St. Paul said, “ Father, I thank Thee Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. ” Therefore we are not at all afraid of the charge of intellectual imbecility.

And, in the second place, we deny that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has lost its power. Its influence is gradually spreading amongst the more civilized nations of Asia. It has redeemed whole tribes in Central and Southern Africa from heathenism, and it is giving a peaceful civilization to what were once the cannibal islands of the Pacific ; and whilst our armchair critics are discussing Christian evidences at home, the missionary abroad, amidst the snows of North America, facing the fevers of Western Africa, toiling amidst the countless millions of China, is making new Christian evidences to-day ; evidences of consecrated lives, and stern self-denial for Jesus’ sake ; evidences of barbarity changed to gentleness, cruelty to kindness, and abominable lustfulness to purity and truth.

And, further, we deny that even at home is true Christianity losing its power. True, there was a time when the so-called Christian priesthood exerted a power which we are thankful to say it has lost to-day. The priests of Rome in the Middle Ages, monopolizing the learning and science of the day, compelled even rulers to acknowledge their authority, and by the compactness of their organization, the superiority of their learning, and the unscrupulousness wherewith they worked on the superstitions of the ignorant, claimed and obtained a power which we trust the clergy may never obtain again. But as the Church became

more corrupt, and as learning became more disseminated, men chafed under this ecclesiastical tyranny, and at last claimed the right to speak out what had long been simmering in men's minds, and, released from the fear of the Inquisition and of the civil sword, infidelity has become more blatant; but many of us prefer by far the present state of things, for the triumphs of the cross are now legitimate—not coerced by ecclesiastical despotism, but wrought by the power of God the Holy Ghost.

And, lastly, we maintain that, in spite of the charge of intellectual imbecility, it is our highest wisdom to maintain the grand old evangelical doctrine, that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," in all its integrity and purity. For what is the stone which they offer to us instead of bread? They tell us we must not look upon the cross as making an atonement for human guilt, but simply as a manifestation of the Father's love. It was a manifestation of the Father's love—a wonderful manifestation of the Father's love: "God commended His love toward us, in that, whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But we fail to see how it could be a manifestation of the Father's love unless it was also a propitiation for human sin. For think; suppose a house is on fire in Kensington, and my children are lying peacefully asleep in Highbury. I rush in and wake them, and hurry them down to Kensington. "Now, children, stand still and watch; I am about to give you a manifestation of your father's love." Forthwith I plunge into the burning house. I rush from cellar to attic. At last I emerge, scorched, singed, half-dead. "There, children, is a manifestation of your father's love." A manifestation of your father's madness, nothing else! Of course, if my children are in danger,

I can understand how my plunging into the fire to rescue them would be a manifestation of their father's love ; but if they are in no danger whatsoever, where is the manifestation of his love ? And yet men want me to believe there was no objective necessity for the death of Christ, but that He only died to give a theatrical display of the love of God. The very idea is totally abhorrent, and the charge of intellectual imbecility ought rather to be brought against men who teach such things. No, no ; "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

Again, my brethren, think what great stress all the four evangelists agree in laying on the sufferings and death of Christ. Only two of them narrate His birth ; only two of them give to us the details of His temptation. The Sermon on the Mount is not to be found either in St. Mark or in St. John. St. John tells us nothing about His transfiguration or His ascension. But all four evangelists give the story of His crucifixion with the greatest possible fulness of detail. And this is so entirely contrary to the general practice of Holy Scripture, which insists more upon men's lives than upon their deaths. The deaths of Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Daniel, are passed over in most cases with the barest mention ; and the same is true in the New Testament. But all the four evangelists agree in giving this great prominence to Christ's death. And in doing so they were only following the example of our Lord Himself. From the very first He had the cross always in view. They would destroy the temple of His body ; He was to be lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness ; He constantly spake of His decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. And as the fatal hour drew nigh an awful horror swept across His soul. "Now

is My soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour." No, you cannot understand the horror of His soul, or the agony in the garden, unless there was something in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ very, very different from what appears upon the surface.

And does He give us no clue as to what this is ? Men tell us that the doctrine of the propitiatory character of our Lord's death is a Pauline doctrine ; but are not the seed-plants of this doctrine to be found in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ ? Look, for instance, at Matt. xx. 28, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." A ransom ! Every Jew would know what a ransom was. He had paid the ransom for his eldest son by the sacrifice of a lamb (Exod. xiii. 13). He had paid the half-shekel as a ransom for his own soul when he was enrolled on the register of his tribe. The Book of Leviticus was full of injunctions with regard to the ransoming of the manslayer, the slave, or the alienated possession. And so Christ says He gave His life a ransom for many.

And, further, do you remember upon that last night—that night on which He was betrayed, when He was keeping that solemn Passover with His disciples ; that most solemn feast in the whole Jewish year ; that feast in which they commemorated the shedding of the blood of the Paschal lamb, which redeemed them from the land of bondage—He took bread and brake it, and He took the cup and blessed it, saying, "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Is it possible to conceive a more solemn occasion ? Is it possible to require a clearer statement of the great

truth that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"? And, further, remember this statement was associated with an ordinance which was to be observed by His disciples to the end of time, showing the importance and the fundamental character of the doctrine.

What, then, is the doctrine of the Atonement? Here it is, my brethren, that I feel we must speak with the deepest reverence, and with the consciousness of our own utter ignorance. We can trace the results of that atonement; we insist upon the necessity of it; but when we try to explain the *rationale* of it, we feel there are deeper depths than any finite understanding can possibly fathom. The altar of old stood foursquare. What took place upon the eastern side was open and patent to all. There was the place of ashes (Lev. i. 16). The morning sun rose upon an accepted sacrifice, and the first thing the worshipper saw, as he entered the sacred courts, was that the Lord had turned to ashes, *i.e.* accepted (Ps. xx. 3) his burnt sacrifice. Yes, the eastern side of the altar was the place of acceptance and of peace. And so, as we approach the cross of Christ, we can see He has made peace by His blood. The sacrifice is accepted; man may draw near to God. As we move round to the north side of the altar, we can see what took place upon the northern side. There the sacrifice was slain (Lev. i. 11); there the victim suffered. And so, as we gaze upon the cross upon its northward aspect, we can mark somewhat of the sufferings of Jesus. "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow; rejected by My own; deserted by My disciples; betrayed by My companion. These are the wounds where-with I have been wounded in the house of My friends." Compassing the altar upon the southern side (Ezek. xlvii. 1),

we can see a pure river of the water of life flowing forth, deepening as it flows, and going down into the desert, and making it bloom and blossom as a rose. And so, as we gaze upon the cross upon its southward aspect, we see the blessings that cross has brought to this poor desert-world of ours. Wherever that river of life doth come, joy and peace and love spring up like flowers along its banks. But we are nowhere told what happened upon the westward side—the side towards the holy place—the Godward side. But there was a westward side; for constantly, in the Book of Leviticus, we are told the sacrifice was to be slain “before the Lord.” Not simply before men, to show them the heinousness of sin, or that sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death; but before the Lord. But we are never told aught about that western side, except that when the priests approached that side they were to be careful not to let their nakedness appear. And it is when we approach that side we feel our own nakedness and ignorance the most.

The problem, therefore, before God—be it reverently spoken—seems simply to have been this: “How can God be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?” Three conditions must be satisfied. First, justice must be satisfied; secondly, holiness must be encouraged; thirdly, love must be drawn forth. Now, it is generally on the ground of the first condition not being fulfilled that men presume to question the doctrine of the Atonement. They cannot conceive how it can be consonant with eternal justice to make one man suffer for another man; and I think every thinking man must have a certain sympathy with this difficulty; and I have often heard the doctrine of the Atonement so stated—though I am bound to say more by its

opponents than by those who believe it—that one's whole moral nature revolts at the selfishness and the injustice of it. God the Father is represented as an angry, vengeful God, just about to smite the miserable sinner at His feet, when the gentle Jesus interposes and receives the stroke instead; and we congratulate ourselves, and say it is expedient for us that one man die for the people, and that the whole people perish not. Oh no, my brethren! this is but a travesty of the Atonement. A wrathful Saul may fling his javelin at a Jonathan because a David is beyond his reach. But this is blasphemously untrue of our Father God. And yet, I fear, sometimes by our illustrations we do give this idea to the ignorant and to the young. We say a boy has done wrong at school; he is about to be punished, when an innocent boy steps up and asks to be allowed to take his place, and the master punishes the innocent for the guilty. It is very kind, no doubt, of the innocent boy to offer to take the punishment; but the master has no right to strike him. No; there are two things which must always be kept in view, if justice is to be satisfied by the suffering of a substitute.

First, the substitute must bear a certain relationship to the party inflicting the punishment. If the master had struck himself, it would have been a different thing. A little child was admitted into one of our hospitals. The young doctor saw the child's life depended upon the poison being sucked from the little child's throat, though he knew it was almost certain death to do so. He had no right to tell the nurse standing by to suck that tube; but he sucked the tube himself, caught the infection, and died; but England called him a hero who in the other case would have been a murderer. So St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 19) would

have us never forget that God was in Christ, reconciling the world, not to some third person, but to Himself. Oh, my brethren, hold fast the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, or else I do not know what you can make of His atonement. God could never have accepted the death of Gabriel, or of any angel, however immaculate, for the sins of a fallen world ; but God was in Christ.

Secondly, the substitute must bear a certain relationship to the sinner who deserves the punishment. The king, however innocent, suffers for his subjects' faults ; the wife, however sober, suffers for her drunken husband. Now, I believe the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, by virtue of His Creatorship, bears a relationship to this world (Col. i. 15, 16), so that the defection of this world from righteousness, although everything which He had made, behold, it was very good, yet was, we may say, naturally visited upon Him. Now, viewed from this point of view, we see vicarious sacrifice upon every side of us ; it seems to be one of the laws of our existence. The innocent wife suffers more on account of her husband's fault than even he does himself ; the grief-stricken parent feels even more acutely than the prodigal boy the shame of his wrongdoing.

And, further, this vicarious suffering is one of the greatest moral powers in the universe. If his sin could be expiated by himself alone, there is many a man who would be willing to pay the penalty in order to enjoy the promised pleasure ; but when he sees he cannot expiate the sin by his own punishment alone, but it affects others, even the dearest and the best—that innocent wife, child, or parent must bear a considerable amount of the punishment as well—then he may well hang back, for he sees what a

selfish, shameful thing sin is. If he is proof against this, then his heart is hard indeed. Now, this is the great truth which I see upon the cross of Christ. My sin affects even God Himself, and the consequences of my sin reach even to the throne of heaven; and therefore the cross of Christ not merely satisfies eternal justice, but also has this marvellous redemptive power, and I must hate the sin which caused this sorrow to my Lord.

But the triumph of the cross is completed when I see Him voluntarily undergoing the consequences of my sin. We have seen a man who has been terribly wronged by his wife, when at last that wife has been brought to justice, take his stand by her—we might almost say with her—in the dock, and, by his very devotion to the unhappy woman, almost kindle a sympathy for her, despite the baseness of her conduct. So the cross of Christ not only produces shame for my sin, but gratitude to my Saviour; and as I gaze at the cross of Christ, I know not which to admire the most, the wisdom which designed the wondrous plan, or the love which carried it out. Yes, my brethren, “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;” for if not, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, so far from being to me a manifestation of God’s love, only fills me with horror and despair. For what have we here? A man, if He be only a man, who has lived the most perfect life this world has ever seen; a life of perfect devotion to His God, and of loving service for His fellow-men; a life which I, with all my striving and my prayers, can never hope to reach; and yet when He comes to die, despised, rejected by His fellow-men, He calls upon the God He has served so well, and God turns a deaf ear to all His cries, until the darkness wraps about His soul, and the agonizing

cry is extorted from Him, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Tell me not, then, God is a God of love. If He forsook Jesus of Nazareth in His hour of need, what hope have I that He will sustain me? It is no use living a holy life. The noblest life that was ever lived He suffered to go out in the darkness of impenetrable gloom. No, no, my brethren, there is but one truth which throws a light upon the darkness of the cross on Calvary: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

THE NEW BIRTH.

THE NEW BIRTH.

“If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”—JOHN iii. 12.

IT was midnight, and there was a stealthy tread outside the humble cottage where abode the Christ of God. Presently the door was thrown ajar, and there came into the circle of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Galilæan followers one of the foremost men in the city of Jerusalem. His phylacteries betokened him to be a Pharisee of more than usual influence and position. Taking his seat beside the Lord Jesus Christ, he opened the conversation thus: “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God;” thus almost involuntarily making the admission that he and his friends had come to the determined conclusion that the young Galilæan Prophet had indeed been sent by God. “We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these ‘miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.”

Not for one single moment are we to regard Nicodemus as an emissary from his companions, sent to entrap the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not the slightest trace of hostility on the part of this man, who pays this midnight visit to the Master; and neither do I think it was mere curiosity that brought him to Jesus. Rather do I regard

Nicodemus, Pharisee though he was, as one of the most conscientious of his sect—one whose character is reproduced in Zacharias the priest; or Simeon, who waited to see the Consolation of Israel; or Saul of Tarsus, who was able to declare that he had “lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Nicodemus was a man who, by his sanctity and holiness, had so far won the good opinion of his companions, that he had received the highest position a layman could occupy in the national council. He was the master of the Sanhedrim; only the high priest and the sagan, his deputy, ranked above him. He was a man who had striven to the uttermost to keep all the observances of the Mosaic Law; but he was a man who was not yet satisfied, for he yearned still for a deeper and a truer holiness. Yes, Nicodemus must have felt that there was a deep yearning and longing in his soul for something he had not yet.

It is true he feared his fellow-men, and therefore he came by night to the Lord Jesus Christ. But he was sincere; he was anxiously yearning to live a holier and a purer life. And our Lord Jesus Christ gauged the man at once. Clearly and distinctly He said to him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” What you want, Nicodemus, is not some new rule or regulation, not some new day of fasting, not some new iron law; you have often striven to bind yourself by these in the past. No; what you want is an entire change in the old man—what you want is a new birth; for, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Be born again!” Nicodemus cannot understand how such a new birth is to be brought about; and yet our Lord Jesus

Christ had, by the very term which He employed, explained whence the new birth was to be derived : " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born (*ἄνωθεν*) from above ;" for in God's universe all life comes down from above. Just as the vegetable life comes down to the mineral life, and, transmuting the mineral into the vegetable life, raises it to a higher kind of life ; so the spiritual life in like manner must come down from above, and, descending upon the mere animal life, transmute the mere animal into the spiritual life. Nicodemus felt that the Master had indeed gauged his want. Our Lord Jesus Christ appealed first of all to his conscience, and his conscience responded. It was in no carping spirit, then, that Nicodemus answered our Lord, when he said, " How can these things be? How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" " I only wish it were possible to be born again. I only wish I could now go forth without my present being trammelled by my past. I only wish I could go forth without my desires being fettered by my habits. But how can these things be? Our Lord Jesus Christ answered him, that even if he could enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, it would effect nothing ; for " that which is born of the flesh is flesh ;" that even if he had started out again as a little child, he would be an unchanged man ; it would be a mere physical birth, and it would avail him nothing. And yet how many a man in Nicodemus's place has made the same mistake ! " Oh, I wish I could start again ; my life would be very, very different to what it has been in the past." The drunkard longs in his better moments that he had never touched the fatal cup, that he might start out again without the insatiable thirst for drink ;

the libertine that his Augean stable might be cleansed, and that he might once more be pure in thought and word and deed, as a little child; the frivolous pleasure-seeker that she might be able to shake herself free from her frivolity, and be able to put to some good use the talents of her misspent life. But, alas! the present is paralyzed by the past; if we could only start again it would all be very different. Nay, my brethren, it would be very much the same; you might not have the same falls, but you would have similar falls. If a man be not "born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Now, when he heard this, Nicodemus's first thought, as a well-instructed scribe, would be, that this change must be a new creation altogether. He had read in the Scriptures that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and there came forth a new creation; and this Galilæan Teacher would teach him that just as the old world was fashioned by water and the Spirit, so there must be such a radical change in the man that it could only be called a new creation. But he would learn also something deeper still: he would learn that not only must there be outward purification, but that there must be inward inspiration also; there must be the new reviving power within; there must be the Spirit of God. Not only must the past be obliterated by the water, but there must be a new power imparted for the present. It is of no use, my brother, only having the past obliterated; it is of no use starting out upon a new life, unless you have the new power—the power of the Holy Ghost—within, or there will be the same falls as there have been in the past. And, further, I think Nicodemus could not help thinking of

the strange preacher of the desert, who had been baptizing—not only as he and his companions had baptized Gentile proselytes, who, before they could be received into the Jewish Church, must undergo this symbol of a radical change; but this strange hermit of the desert had been baptizing Jew, Pharisee, and publican alike. And this new Teacher from Galilee would tell him—master of the Sanhedrim though he was—that he needed a radical change, just as much as the Gentile dog he might be inclined to spurn.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, having thus touched Nicodemus's conscience, goes on to deal with him still further, and appeals to his experience. He shows him that, when this great change has taken place in a man, he is free—free as the wind. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He is as free as the wind; he does as he pleases. He is no longer cabined, cribbed, and confined by rules and regulations, but he lives as he lists.

Poor Nicodemus opens his eyes when he hears this, and says, "How can these things be?" Live as I please! If I lived as I pleased, I should be turned out of the Sanhedrim to-morrow. My only chance of living a decent life is to have a rule for every hour in the day. "How can these things be?" And yet the Master insisted that it must be so. He said, "Nicodemus, art thou the master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Have you not learned, Nicodemus, in your dealings, not only with yourself, but with other men, that mere outward rules will never change the heart? You may keep punctiliously every hour of prayer, every fast, and yet your heart will

remain as it was. "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" And then Christ went on to say, "If I have told you these earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" What are the earthly things? The earthly things are the things I have told you of—namely, the absolute necessity for a new birth if a man is to enjoy heaven; that he must have a taste for heaven if he is to enter therein. What would be the use of a man taking a ticket admitting him to a concert-room if he had no capacity to enjoy the music he would hear there? There must be a radical change in the man, which Christ could only liken to a new birth, if he is to enjoy heaven. And secondly, speaking to His experience, Christ told Nicodemus that this change could not possibly be brought about by any exterior means. It must be produced by a spiritual power within the heart. "If you do not believe these earthly things, how can you believe the heavenly things?"

Ah, dear friends, would Jesus Christ say the same things to us to-day? If you are to enjoy heaven, my brother, you must have a taste for heaven; you cannot enjoy heaven so long as your mind is set upon earthly things. You do not want a revelation from heaven to tell you this; as thinking men, you must know it. If a man is suddenly transported from this world, where his thoughts have been set only upon the heaping up of silver or gold, or where he has devoted all his energies to polemics or politics, how can he be in a fit state to enjoy heaven? And, further, we do not want a revelation from heaven to tell us that outward rules and ceremonies will never produce this inward change. Our experience with ourselves, our experience with our fellow-men, teaches us

that mere outward laws will never effect it. Jesus Christ, speaking to-day, would say, "If you do not believe these earthly things, how can you believe the heavenly things?"

What are the heavenly things? They are the three things he proceeds to unfold to us, namely: How this change is to be brought about. This passes men's understanding. They can see the need of it, but how it is to be brought about—this passes their comprehension. They want a revelation from heaven; and the first revelation is this, that the Lord Jesus Christ, though God, became man. "We speak," He says in the eleventh verse, "that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

Oh, brethren, when shall we learn this, that in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ we have no mere guesses after truth, but we have the truth? It is not as if one had ascended up to heaven, and, coming down again, had given us a little bit of truth that he had guessed at or reached after; but it is the eternal Son of God, who was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, coming down to us and giving us the whole of the counsel of God; it is the eternal Son of God revealing to us the whole truth of God. Therefore, if once I know that Jesus Christ has stated anything, argument from that time ceases. I must believe it. It is not something I can argue about; it is the truth of God as He has stated it, and therefore I, as a little child, must accept it.

The second heavenly truth is this, that the eternal Son of God, who became incarnate, is to die. Man could not have thought of that. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in

the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Ah, brethren, no angel or archangel could ever have planned that way of salvation ; no man could ever have postulated such a scheme. It needed a revelation from heaven to teach us that these heavenly blessings are brought to us by the incarnate and dying Son of God. "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Common sense, your own experience, your own conscience, may tell you the earthly things ; your own common sense and experience will tell you that you must be born again, and that this cannot be produced by any exterior ceremony, or any outward thing. But this is a heavenly thing, and "we speak that we do know, and we testify that we have seen ;" and it is not the testimony of one who has ascended up to heaven and brought down part of the truth, but the testimony of the Son of God. His testimony is this—that just as "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up ;" and that eternal life is the blessing He has come to bring. Then a radical change takes place in man—so now he loves what he hated before, and hates what before he loved ; and that change is by loving and trusting a crucified Redeemer.

The reference in ver. 14 is, of course, to the story in Numb. xxi. The children of Israel were smitten with the plague of fiery serpents ; there was not a tent where you might not find men dead or dying from the

effects of their poisonous bites. Then God said unto Moses, "Make thee a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and behold, it shall come to pass, whosoever looketh thereon shall live." Now, why did God ordain this strange means for the healing of the people? Doubtless, we may answer, first of all to test their obedience. But surely, we may say, there was a deeper reason still, namely, to stimulate their faith; He wanted them to look upon the plague as defeated and expelled. That serpent of brass was exhibited as a trophy. It was dead, it had lost its sting, it had no power to harm; and yet, mark you, it was no real serpent. If Moses had killed one of those fiery serpents, and put it upon a pole, the Israelites might justly have said, "Why bid us look at that? True, you have killed one serpent, but there are thousands of serpents upon every side." But this serpent of brass hung there as the great representative serpent, to assure the children of Israel the plague was now passed and gone. Even so sin is a serpent, beautiful, fascinating in its appearance, but at last it biteth like a serpent, it stingeth like an adder. But at the cross of Christ I see sin subdued, sin condemned; and it is the cross of Christ which redeems me back from sin, and, in a strange mysterious way, not only atones for my past sin, but makes me hate what before I loved, and love that for which before I had no taste.

And, thirdly, this change is free to all who will but accept it in simple faith. This is the third heavenly thing which you could never have guessed, Nicodemus, and for which you need a revelation from above. You would never have guessed that the Son of God would have become man, and, becoming man, that He would

have died a shameful death upon the tree; and that, having died, the way of salvation was now by simple faith. You would have imposed stringent rules and regulations. But God knows these are unnecessary now for the man who knows that "Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." As he gazes upon that cross a new motive power is implanted in him. He loves his Lord, and His service now becomes perfect freedom; for he strives now to follow out His will, not from fear of punishment, but out of love to Him who died for him. Thus and thus only can the desired change take place, and the man is born again.

Is this new birth yours? If not, my brother, gaze once more at the cross of Christ, and see Him dying for your sin, and you will learn by the grace of His Holy Spirit to hate the sin and to love the holy and the good.

“LORD, SHOW US THE
FATHER.”

“LORD, SHOW US THE FATHER.”

“Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”—JOHN xiv. 8.

THE last night had come ; the supper was ended ; the traitor had gone out ; the cross was now looming in the distance ; but how wonderful is the unselfishness of Jesus Christ ! In a few hours His Passion would begin ; but there is no thought about Himself. His only care is to comfort His disciples, for sorrow was filling their hearts. Therefore He said unto them, “Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” And yet there was a reason for their sorrow. True, it was so trivial compared to His, but it was real and poignant.

1. In the first place, He was about to leave them. Yes, they were to be left as sheep without a shepherd ; a little flock, with wolves ravening on every side. “Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day ?” We can quite understand the bitterness of soul which led Elisha to reply, “Yea, I know it ; hold ye your peace.” But now the Bridegroom was to be taken from them, and then shall they fast in those days. Say, Christian, is not this a legitimate cause of sorrow, when the Beloved has withdrawn Himself and is gone ? We yearn for the personal presence of our beloved Lord, and the waiting Church prays daily with a sigh, “Amen. Even so, come,

Lord Jesus." But oh! when we lose the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ, it is as if the light of day were gone out from our eyes, and no wonder if our hearts be troubled.

2. But not only was He about to leave them, but He was about to die, and that by the most cruel death. His was to be no translation, no melting away in transfiguration-glory. Ah me! we have known what it is to stand by the bedside of the beloved, and watch the labouring breath, until at last self-restraint seemed to be impossible, and we had to turn away to give vent to the tears we dared not show.

"Yes, thou mayest weep; for Jesus wept
Such tears as those thou sheddest now,
When, for the living or the dead,
Sorrow lay heavy on His brow."

But in Je us' case there was no gentle loosening of the cords. No; they were to break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers. "Thy holy body have they defiled." The coarse "Down with it! down with it even to the ground!" as they destroyed the temple of His body, were like barbed arrows in the hearts of His believing people. No wonder, therefore, that they were troubled. And, spiritually, my brethren, we have the same source of trouble to-day. Men crucify afresh the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. He is misrepresented, maligned, despised, mocked, rejected, now; and "rivers of water run down our eyes because men keep not Thy Law." Some with coarse blasphemies, others with cunning innuendo learnt from the old serpent, reject our Saviour; and the Christian must lament the dishonour done unto his Lord. "I never saw a happy Christian!"

exclaimed Hume. "And no wonder," was the reply; "for what Christian could be happy in the presence of David Hume?" Yes, this is indeed a legitimate cause of sorrow.

3. And yet this was not all. He was to be betrayed by one of themselves. Yes, there was no doubt of it. The Master had said it: "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Ah! brethren, this is what cut them to the heart. It is sad to meet the open infidel, who gnashes upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But we do not fear him; Jesus has but to speak a word, and he will fall backward to the ground. But it is the Judas who betrays Him with a kiss whom we most fear. Those of whom St. Paul spoke, even weeping, as the enemies of the cross of Christ, were Christian professors who were untrue to their profession. And, on the other hand, the difficulty in dealing with heresy and error is very often intensified by the fact that those who propagate them are, in many respects, so estimable. They betray the Son of man with a kiss.

4. But the fourth and keenest source of sorrow was that they were all of them to deny Him and forsake Him. Ah, Christian, is not this the worst of all? We shudder at the blasphemies of the infidel, we grieve over the treachery of the professor; but it is our own sins and shortcomings which grieve us all the most. To think that we should deny our Lord—we, who owe Him our all; that when despised and rejected of men, we should in cowardice profess that we never knew the Man! Ah, brethren, it is our own inconsistency which causes us the greatest anguish. No wonder they were troubled. And yet, even with these things clearly before Him, the Master set Himself to comfort His disciples,

Now, these sorrows affect different men in different ways, and in this passage they call forth three different questions from three typical men.

You first of all have Peter, in John xiii. 37: "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Brave Peter! In spite of his impetuosity, in spite of his self-confidence, we love the man, for he so evidently loved his Master. Ever since that day when the "Follow Me" called him from his fishing on the Lake of Galilee he had followed Jesus; he had been one of the most intimate of His disciples; even when others had been left outside, he, with James and John, had been permitted to follow Jesus. But now there seemed to be placed before him an impenetrable barrier, and Jesus Christ had said, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now." It was all so strange and inexplicable; He had never denied him so before. "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Jesus knew the brave enthusiastic heart, and I doubt not that promise, albeit it was uttered in rashness and self-confidence, brought joy to the Redeemer's soul. And so we love to see the young coming forward, and bravely setting all difficulties at defiance, draw their sword, and exclaim, "Set my name down." We love to see you, my younger brethren, coming forward at this Confirmation-time, and we hardly like to speak to you of failure and desertion, for fear we should make you despondent or cast down; but yet, following the Master's example, we are bound to do so. We thank God for your enthusiasm—you can scarcely have too much; but enthusiasm is not everything. And when our Lord Jesus Christ looked back upon this scene, in John xxi. 18, He reminded St. Peter, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst

thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” Yes! this self-will was what our Lord Jesus Christ saw when He uttered the warning here. And, dear friends, this is what we have to put you on your guard against. There are some whose enthusiasm danger and trial only serve to rouse; be the enemy however strong, be the danger however great, they will never flee—and they mean it. They are far from being hypocrites; nay, they rather welcome the hour of danger, for it will prove their devotion; but they have miscalculated their power and their endurance. And therefore, in spite of the joy wherewith we welcome your profession of allegiance, we have to warn you that you cannot follow Christ now, not till you have learned your own weakness and want of power. No, brother, you must give up your old self-will; you must stretch out your hands, and let another, even Christ, gird you, and carry you whither otherwise you would not go. You must be willing to say in all submission, “Lead Thou me on,” and in all humility to say, “Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” Then Christ promises, “Thou shalt follow Me afterwards, when thou shalt have learnt not only thine own weakness, but something also of the power of a risen Christ. When thou hast gone out and wept bitterly, when thou hast come back chastened and subdued, then thou shalt follow Me.” And, again, Jesus Christ assures them that there is a home beyond; that in the Father’s house are many mansions, and that, in spite of their failures and their denial, He was going to prepare a place for them. Oh, beloved, is not this wonderful? The Saviour had just

warned them of their desertion; He foresaw it all, and yet with the same breath He assures them He was on His way to prepare for them a place in the Father's house. Here is true forgiveness; and what a comfort would this assurance be to Peter when, after his fall, he was inclined to despair! Yes, Christ foresaw it all, and yet did not cast him out.

The next to speak was Thomas—doubting Thomas. He always looked on the darker side of things. Affectionate and true, yet always desponding. In John xi. 16, when our Lord Jesus Christ expressed the determination to go to Lazarus, in spite of the entreaty of His disciples, who knew the danger which awaited in Judæa, Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him;" and again, after the Resurrection, it was this same desponding, doubting spirit which caused him to be absent from their gathering that first Easter evening, and to pronounce it incredible that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. And so here he seems to doubt if there be a way at all. "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (John xiv. 5). And so, my brethren, to the enthusiasm of youth succeeds the doubt of middle life. When life's trials thicken round about us, when everything goes wrong, when the heavens above us seem to be as brass, when God is a God afar off, when we see inconsistency in the Church and failure in ourselves, then comes the temptation to doubt. Is it all a myth? is there any hereafter? is there any way? And we fall into the agnosticism of Thomas: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus said unto him, "I am the Way . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." The personal Christ is the

answer to every doubt. Keep your eyes fixed upon Him; He is the one Star the blackest night can never quench. Gaze on Him; He will guide you into port. "Yes, I am the Way into the unseen, into the unknown; I alone can solve the doubts. I am the Truth: if it were not so, I would have told you; you can trust Me—ay, implicitly. And I am the Life, and can give you life, so that not only you may see the way, but you may walk therein; you may not only know the truth, but you may live by it; and in spite of the darkness, Thomas, you are travelling to the Father."

"Father!" Philip catches at the word, and utters a cry which has been re-echoed by mankind ever since: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (ver. 8). The scepticism of middle life has been outgrown. Heaven is certain; the way is sure. But why is the way so rough, so mysterious, and so dark? If only we felt sure a Father was ordering it all for us—that He had not left us orphans, to reach heaven as best we may; if only we could be sure He loves us still, in spite of sin and disorder within and without, then we could face the way and walk with bolder step. "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Can you doubt a Father's love when you think of the years of watchful care you have enjoyed with Me? Have I not declared unto you the Father by word and life? Can you not trust Me? Wilt thou not obey Me? Oh, Philip, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And, my brother, however dark the way may be, learn from Jesus Christ to trust the Father still. He must do all

things well, and not one unneeded sorrow will He send to teach the wayward heart no more to rove.

Thus trial affects men in different ways. The young and inexperienced may court it, for they would prove their steadfastness thereby. Take heed, my brother, for a fall may be at hand; but if thy love be true, thou shalt still follow afterwards. The man of middle age may doubt and become despondent. Then turn thine eye to Jesus Christ; He only is the Way. But the one great cry from this throbbing world is the exclamation of St. Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." And by His watchful love, and by His gracious words, Jesus Christ has declared to us the Father, and we rest satisfied.

THE FATHER OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST.

THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

“I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”—MATT. xi. 25.

WE have lately been studying the various conceptions which different saints had of the character and being of God, and the influence which this conception had upon their daily life. We passed in review seven of the grandest of the Old Testament characters, and tried to gauge the influence their conception of God had upon them. Abraham upon the hill-tops, relying on the faithfulness of Jehovah-Jireh, walked as a prince among men. Isaac, whose conception of God is revealed to us by the name by which his son Jacob appealed to God, as “the Fear of Isaac,” taught us the wholesome lesson of reverence and of awe. Jacob never forgot the God of Bethel, who received the wanderer and forgave the sinner. Joseph had a constant realization of the ever-present God; for whether in the prison or the palace, whether as sovereign or slave, the Lord was with Joseph. Moses, the man of God, gave us a new name, “The Rock;” he learnt it perchance amidst the rocks of Sinai and the crags of Horeb. Joshua, the man of war, sees in vision the Captain of the host of the

Lord, and bowed in reverence, asking, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" David, the man after God's own heart, first taught us to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd," and to lie down in peaceful rest beneath His watchful care. But to-day we come to that conception of God which our Lord Jesus Christ injected into the world. He taught us when we pray to say, "Father"—"Our Father." Yes, God was pre-eminently the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the day when He was but twelve years old, and startled His human mother with the question, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" down to His last expiring cry, God was His Father; for His last dying words upon the cross were the quotation from Ps. xxxi. 5, "Into Thy hands I commit My spirit," with the prefix "Father"—"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Now, in bringing before you this conception of God which our Lord Jesus Christ has given us, I scarcely knew what text of Holy Scripture to select; but I have chosen this, partly because it is His first recorded communion with His Father, and partly because it shows us how the thought of the Fatherhood of God sustained Him amidst the greatest sorrows of His earthly life. I fear that sometimes our views of the sufferings of Jesus Christ are somewhat superficial. We think of His agony and bloody sweat, of His cross and passion, but we forget those deeper depths of sorrow which arose from the rejection of His message of love and mercy. Was it nothing to Him, think you, that His message was rejected by the men whom He came to save? His great forerunner as well as Himself had been rejected. John had come as a stern ascetic; He had come mingling with men in their scenes of joy and sorrow. But the world would listen to neither the one nor the other;

and Jesus Christ, in His love for men, felt it keenly, until He fell back upon the Fatherhood of God. Then He felt calmed and satisfied, and could trust the eternal and all-wise love of God. And so must we. And there is nothing like the calm assurance of the Fatherhood of God to calm the soul, when it is face to face with the deepest mysteries of life, or tempest-tossed with its sorrows.

I would ask you, then, to-day, to trace the influence of the Fatherhood of God upon the human life of Jesus Christ, and I think I can see it operating in seven different ways.

1. The Fatherhood of God demands obedience. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" is the first recorded utterance of the Child Jesus. Thus early, at twelve years of age, did He recognize that Sonship implied service. "If I be a Father, where is Mine honour?" is the question God asks man in Mal. i. 6; for "a son honoureth his father." And how easy is obedience if it is rendered to a Father—a true Father! His commands are always for our good; there is nothing tyrannical or arbitrary about them. The true Son loves to obey the true Father. "It is My meat and drink to do My Father's will," saith Jesus Christ, in John iv. 32. And how thoroughly He did it! In John ii. 4, His mother came to Him with the necessities of the bridal party; but He could not answer the appeal of natural affection until His Father gave the word. The same thing happened in John vii. His brethren were about to go up to Jerusalem, and wished Him to accompany them; but not till His Father bade Him could He go. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the

Son likewise." Yes, He was always "obedient unto death."
 "As My Father gave Me commandment, even so I do."

2. The Fatherhood of God produces peace. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." Your Father feeds the ravens, clothes the grass, and He "knoweth that ye have need of all these things." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" You can now understand why Jesus refused to turn the stones into bread. The very temptation of the devil, "If Thou be the Son of God," reminded Him of His Father's care, and He could peacefully leave Himself in His Father's hands. We can now understand why He could sleep peacefully in the tempest, or walk undismayed in the temple when the stones were even now poised in the hands of His enemies. Oh, read that sixth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, ye worrying, careworn sons of men, and inherit the peace of Jesus Christ, resting on His Father's love and power.

3. The Fatherhood of God compels submission. "But supposing things go wrong; supposing prayer is not answered, and that trouble comes?" Oh, brethren, this "supposing,"—what a plague it is to the Christian's life! When shall we learn to march onward without supposing? How often have we learnt that not one-tenth of the trials we fear ever come to pass? that the stone which troubles us, when we reach it has already been rolled away? But still God tells us trials may—nay, will—come; and through much tribulation we shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yes, "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." And, moreover, we are not to

despise the chastening of the Lord. Stoical indifference is a long way removed from Christian resignation. God means us to feel the trial; and tears are no index to Him of an unchastened will. But in the bitterest trial, if you can realize the Fatherhood of God, resignation will be easy. The pruning-knife may be very sharp, but if my Father is the Husbandman, I know what is taken away is either useless or harmful. "Thy will be done," may be very hard to say; but if I can preface it with "Father," it is very easy. "Father, not my will, but Thine, be done."

4. The Fatherhood of God promotes intercourse with the unseen. Prayer is quite compatible with resignation. Jesus Christ was perfectly resigned in the garden of Gethsemane, and yet He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." God loves to have His children talk to Him, and tell Him their desires, and question Him as to their doubts, so long as they do not murmur against Him; and oftentimes He is most gracious even when He denies the request. But prayer seems to me to be very different in the New Testament to what it was in the Old. In the Old there must be the taking off the shoes, the intercession of the priest, the presenting of the incense, and the constant sprinkling of the way of access by the blood. But in the New Testament the way into the holiest is now made manifest; at any moment we may draw near to God. No special place or attitude is necessary, no mediating priest is now required; the blood has been sprinkled once for all, and the incense of Christ's merits has an everlasting efficacy. We draw near not as Esther to Ahasuerus, trembling as to whether the golden sceptre will be held out to us or not, but we draw near as children to their father, with perfect confidence and with perfect freedom.

5. The Fatherhood of God produces love to the brethren. We need scarcely stay to quote passages in order to prove this; for as our Lord Jesus Christ moved about upon this earth, He looked upon everything as belonging to His Father, and therefore He loved them all—birds and flowers all found a place in His loving heart. How much more, then, the sons of men? “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,” for “it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” Oh, brethren, if we realized that One is our Father, from “whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,” how much more as brethren should we live, not envying one another or provoking one another, but bearing one another’s burdens in the Lord!

6. The Fatherhood of God promotes jealousy for the Father’s honour. No sooner have we learned to lisp out the name of “Our Father which art in heaven,” than at once the first petition must necessarily be, “Hallowed be Thy name.” You can quite understand the indignation of the Lord Jesus Christ when He saw the buyers and sellers defiling the temple of the Lord, for He looked upon the temple as His Father’s house. “Make not My Father’s house a house of merchandise.” Again, for the same reason He rebuked all superstitious worship; it proved that there was such a terrible miscomprehension of His Father’s character. “The true worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” Again, in Matt. v. 16, the first command He gave to the citizens of the heavenly city was this: “Let your light shine before men;” but the reason was, “that they may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The Father’s glory is His one concern; and so it was all

through His life to the very end. "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name" (John xii. 27, 28). And in His last prayer this is the ultimate object at which He aims. "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee" (John xvii. 1). And how beautifully does He show His regard for the Father's honour in John xvi. 26, 27: "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you." And one can almost hear the sigh which He heaves in John xvii. 25, when He looks back upon all the way in which the world has misunderstood the Father's character. Alas, brethren! if we had the spirit of the Son we should feel more keenly the dishonour done to the Father's name, and strive more earnestly that our Father may be better understood and more abundantly glorified.

7. And, lastly, the Fatherhood of God inspires the hope of reunion. How constantly is this thought before our Lord Jesus Christ during the last few days of His life on earth! The departure from the world was a going to the Father. "A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father" (John xvi. 16); "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father" (John xiv. 21). And it is in the Father's house that the many mansions are, and it is the Father's reward which is put before the Christian, in Matt. vi. 6, as the one object he has in view. Oh, to be in the Father's house! Oh, to see the Father's smile! Oh, to receive the Father's welcome!

THE CONSCIENCE.

THE CONSCIENCE.

“Their conscience also bearing them witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”—ROM. ii. 15.

WE have listened to the sigh of humanity as summed up in the cry of Philip, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;” and we heard our Lord’s reply, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;” and we have gazed with reverence upon that marvellous Life which revealed to us both the Father and the life we ought to live (*πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*, 1 John i. 2). And now arises a most important question: To whom does God hold this relationship of Father? There are many who, in the present day, are proclaiming loudly He is the Father of us all. But this doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God is one of which many of us are perhaps justly suspicious, for it is brought forward by those who affirm that the Atonement is unnecessary, that there is nothing objective in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross, and who draw most illegitimate conclusions from the doctrine. Forgetful of other revelations in God’s Word, they picture God as a fond, indulgent parent, and imagine He can never smite the sinner or condemn the guilty. Now we, knowing how contrary this is to Holy Scripture, are in danger of

running into the other extreme, and denying that God holds any relation to the unconverted man save that of Creator and of Judge.

We know there is another Fatherhood of God—namely, the special Fatherhood of God over His own children by adoption in Jesus Christ, in John i. 12, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name;” or in 1 John iii. 1, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

Knowing, then, that there is a Fatherhood which is not the common heritage of all men, we are inclined to deny that there is any Fatherhood of God for mankind, unless you agree that the term “Fatherhood” is simply another expression for “Creator,” and that there is no other relationship between God and man than that which is shared by beasts and birds.

Now, I think perhaps we have been too hasty in such statements. We are afraid of climbing the peak of divine truth because we see the precipice of error on the other side; and I think there is a sense in which God is the Father of all men, even unconverted men, and that not merely as Creator, but distinctly as Father. I know many insist, that unless you look upon the Fatherhood of God simply as the relationship of the maker to the thing made, you cannot speak of the universal Fatherhood of God. To a certain extent, they say, you may call the watchmaker the father of the watch, and so, but only so, can you speak of God as the Father of all men. But is this scriptural? I think not. Look at the Sermon on the Mount. Is that spoken only to the disciples? Were not the multitude also there?

For in Matt. vii. 28 we read "the people were astonished at His doctrine;" and can you not imagine that great crowd walking awestruck to their homes that night, new thoughts swelling in their hearts, new possibilities opening up before their eyes, as they learned they were not merely subjects cringing before a monarch, but children of a great Father, who is in heaven—erring, sinful children, it is true, but children still?

I am afraid we have suffered great loss by ignoring the great truth that there is a relationship between God and man other than that of Creator. We have suffered loss with regard to the body of Christian truth, for this doctrine is now brought forward by those who press it to illegitimate conclusions. We have suffered loss for ourselves for our own spiritual life; for this doctrine is the antidote to that selfishness of which we evangelicals have to beware. Holding most strongly as we do the right of private judgment, there is the danger lest we think too much of self, and of self-salvation, and of our own view of truth. We have suffered loss in evangelistic work; for we have tried to get the prodigal to say, "I have sinned," before we have taught him to say, "Father." We have pointed to the misery and to the curse, instead of to the love against which he has sinned, and the image from which he has fallen.

Now, this is the subject which I invite you to study with me, and in studying which there are three main questions which we must keep prominently before ourselves.

First, Are there any instincts in man upon which the Holy Spirit of God works in order to produce the new birth, and which instincts are not to be found in the lower creation? Second, Whence are these instincts derived?

Third, How far have these instincts been affected by the Fall?

In answer to the first, I think most certainly there are instincts in man which are not to be found in the lower animals, which form a platform upon which the Holy Spirit must work in order to produce the new birth.

I know, when we speak of impossibilities with God, we must speak with bated breath, especially when we remember that "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham;" but we may say it would be abhorrent to any one, with any reverence for the Holy Spirit, to think of an ape, or dog, or horse being born again into eternal life. That is to say, there is something in man which cannot be found in the lower animals; something in man upon which the Holy Spirit works, and in consequence of which He brings about the new birth.

In the second place, Whence are these instincts derived? These instincts which are thus peculiar to men are derived from God Himself. Turn to the first chapter of Genesis, where you see God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" and again, we read in chap. ii. 7, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." We believe that there we have something very different in kind to the creation of the rest of God's universe, and that there is something which man received not merely by the fiat of the Creator, but by the imparting to him something from God Himself; that is to say, God is the Parent as well as the Creator of man. He not simply said, "Let there be man," and there was man, but, having formed man, He breathed His own Spirit into man.

Then we come to the third question, How is this affected by the Fall? The instincts which were imparted to man by God have certainly not been destroyed, else man would be reduced to the position of the beasts that perish. I know we use sometimes very strong language with reference to the fall of man—and none too strong, when we see the sin around and the corruption within; but yet we ought to be careful lest strong language lead us into error. I show you a watch which has been broken, and when I say that watch is good for nothing, I do not mean that it has been turned into a mass of corruption; it only wants to be put into the hands of the artificer, and to be repaired and readjusted, and it will again keep time. So when man fell—he is good for nothing for the purposes for which God intended him; but if only the great Artificer, by His magic touch, repair that which is broken and adjust that which is wrong, once more man will fulfil the purposes of his creation.

Again, we believe man was made to be a temple of the living God, but just as Cromwell's soldiers spoiled our churches, and stalled their horses in our sanctuaries, but when they were expelled those abbeys once again resounded with hymns to the praise and glory of God, so we believe that man, designed to be the temple of God, may yet again be restored. Man, at the Fall, became an idol temple. Every niche has its idol deity, and self sits enthroned at the high altar; but when once the idols have been cleared away, that temple may again be a temple of God. Nehemiah restored the walls of Jerusalem out of the heaps of rubbish which were burned; and so we believe there are still in fallen man the aims and aspirations upon which God the Holy Spirit works to restore the Jerusalem of man's soul.

I propose, then, that we should take these instincts and see how they are affected by the Fall, and how the Holy Spirit works upon them. To-day I would take the instinct of conscience.

In the first place, we must insist that there is an instinct of conscience in every man. I know you might allege much to contradict this assertion. We have all been shocked during this last week to read the dying statement of one who threatened at one time to play a foremost part in the history of France, and who fell by a self-inflicted wound upon the tomb of his late mistress, forgetful of the wife and children he has wronged. He dared to write, almost as the last words he was ever to write on earth, that he had always done his duty. Surely, we say, the man had no conscience left. But deadened though his conscience was in so many respects, perhaps by his circumstances, perhaps by the public opinion of his country or his "set"—into that I enter not—still, even that man had a conscience, *i.e.* a moral sense, as to what was right and wrong; and although many of his standards may have been false and wrong, yet some of them were true and in accordance with eternal right. For instance, it is quite conceivable that he might have disdained to put his hand into your pocket and taken therefrom your purse, and that not because of the punishment he would have suffered if detected, but because conscience told him it was wrong. We quite grant, then, that in many ways conscience may be deadened, conscience may be perverted, conscience may be ignorant, conscience may be weak, and for all those reasons its verdict may not at all be in accordance with the law of eternal righteousness; but still we maintain there is in man, even in the most fallen man, a sense of moral obligation,

and that a voice within him is continually saying, "I ought," when he is contemplating the future, or "I ought not to have done," when he is looking back upon the past.

Now, this voice, "I ought," is peculiar to man. You never say "it ought" with the same idea of moral obligation of a machine; the moral obligation underlying the word is reflected back upon the maker or the engineer in charge. Nor do you say it of a beast. If you say a dog ought not to bite, you simply mean that the bite is disadvantageous to yourself or others, but not that the dog is incurring any moral guilt by reason of infringing any law of its nature. Nor do you say it of any physical infirmity. When the blind man says he ought to see, he is far from imputing any moral delinquency to himself; and when you hand a telescope to your friend, and tell him he ought to see such a feature in the landscape, you do not mean to impute any moral blame to him if he fail to do so. But the "ought" of conscience is very different, and distinctly implies a moral obligation.

Again, this conscience deals not only with open acts, but reserves to itself the right of judging motives. The same deed may be divinely good or devilishly bad, according to the motive which inspires it. To give a cup of cold water to assuage the thirst of a dying soldier on the battle-field, may be the work of a ministering angel; to give a cup of cold water to the poor victim of the Inquisition in order to prolong his tortures, may be the work of an incarnate devil. Therefore we maintain there is a sense of moral responsibility in every man which takes cognizance, not only of his actions, but also of the motives which inspires them.

Now comes the question, Whence is this instinct of conscience derived? Some tell us it is simply the result

of education, of the public opinion by which we are surrounded and in which we have been educated, and therefore it is that the judgments of conscience are so very diverse in divers lands and in different ages. And there is no doubt that there is a great deal of truth in this contention, which we must examine more fully when we investigate what is the effect of the Fall upon this instinct ; but we maintain that the public opinion by which we are guided tends rather to pervert than to form the conscience, and that the true conscience often acts most nobly when it obliges us to go contrary to our education, and contrary to the public opinion of the time.

Others tell us that conscience is only the result of the deductions of reason, or common sense ; that reason sees that such a course of action is the wisest, and therefore conscience approves it to be right ; that, for instance, honesty is the best policy, and therefore it is right ; that we should do to others as we would they should do to us, for it is clearly for our advantage so to do. Now, there can be no doubt that in the general state of society the fear of punishment and the hope of reward are valuable auxiliaries to morality, but we can see at once that this selfish explanation of conscience is beside the mark ; for, first, just so far as these selfish considerations enter into our calculations when we do a virtuous action, the moral virtue of the action is destroyed ; and, secondly, conscience oftentimes urges us to do something which, according to all the dictates of common sense, is entirely contrary to our advantage. "The truth is," as the Duke of Argyle declares in his "Unity of Nature," "we are born into a system of things in which every act carries with it, by indissoluble ties, a long train of consequences reaching to the most distant future, and

which, for the whole course of time, affect our own condition, the condition of other men, and even the condition of external nature. And yet we cannot see those consequences beyond the shortest way, and very often those which lie nearest are in the highest degree deceptive as an index to ultimate results. Neither pain nor pleasure can be accepted as a guide. With the lower animals, indeed, these for the most part tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Appetite is all that the creature has, and in the gratification of it the highest law of the animal being is fulfilled. In man, too, appetite has its own indispensable function, and amounts to nothing more than that of furnishing to reason a few of the primary data on which it has to work—a few, and a few only. Physical pain is, indeed, one of the threatenings of natural authority, and physical pleasure is one of its rewards. But neither the one nor the other forms more than a mere fraction of that awful and imperial code under which we live. It is the code of an everlasting kingdom, and of a jurisprudence which endures throughout all generations. It is a code which continually imposes on man the abandonment of pleasure, and the endurance of pain whenever and wherever the higher purposes of its law demand of him the sacrifice. Nor has this spirit of authority ever been without its witness in the human spirit or its response in the human will. On the contrary, in all ages of the world, dark and distorted as have been his understanding of authority, man has been prone to acknowledge it, and to admit it as the basis of obligation and the rule of duty."

And, besides all this, conscience deals also with a future beyond the grave—a region where reason loses itself, and has to depend upon the guidance of a simple-minded faith. And

that conscience, even in the non-Christian man, does busy about the future, listen to these words of Kephalos in the "Republic" of the heathen Plato: "Thou must know, Socrates, that when man believes that death is near, there is awakened within him a fear and an anxiety to which he was before a stranger. The well-known traditions about the infernal regions, where every one shall suffer punishment for the wrong which he had committed while here on earth, and which traditions he before considered to be absurd, begin now to distress his soul as if they were really true, and he casts now himself a deeper glance into that other world, either because of the weakness of old age, or because he is now close to it. Full of fear and anxiety, he begins to reflect, and to examine if he have wronged any one. He who finds many trespasses in his life is constantly frightened from sleep as a child; he trembles, and passes his life in sorrowful forebodings." How striking is this testimony to the power of conscience from the heathen world! Therefore we feel that conscience cannot be accounted for either as the result of our education or the product of our surroundings, or yet, again, as simply due to the deductions of reason and of common sense. We feel rather that conscience is a testimony to an authority above us; that the "I ought" of conscience is the response to the "Thou shalt" of God; that He before whom, as we saw last Sunday, the instinct of reverence compels us to bow, has an authority which He uses to command what is right and wrong for us to do. To sum up, therefore, we maintain that there is implanted in man, by virtue of Gen. i. 26 and ii. 7, an idea of right and wrong which has been derived from God, and that conscience determines whether this or that action is in accord with this

idea or no. In short, conscience is the compass whereby we may steer the ship.

Now we come to consider how this conscience has been affected by the Fall. To continue our last metaphor—the compass may, alas ! sometimes prove defective ; owing to the masses of steel and iron on board her Majesty's ships of war, their compasses need continually to be adjusted ; and it is greatly to be feared that the late sad wreck of H.M.S. *Serpent* was due to defective compasses, or else to the fact that the compasses were influenced by the masses of iron on the rock-bound coast by which she was steaming. Now, so conscience may oftentimes be influenced by the times and customs amidst which we live, and this great instinct, the gift of God, to enable us to steer our course aright over life's tempestuous sea, may become so perverted, that a man may absolutely be " living in all good conscience before God unto this day," and yet be the chief of sinners, persecuting God's Church, whilst all the time he is imagining that he is doing God's service ; so that what should have been for our wealth has become unto us an occasion of stumbling. " If the light therefore that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness ! " Now, here we see the anomalous position of man. Show any one of the other creatures the right thing, and they do it. They follow their instincts unreservedly, and they are never guilty of moral fault in doing so. But not so man. Though he has this moral sense possessed by no other of the inferior animals, his moral sense is so perverted that he is constantly putting darkness for light, and light for darkness. This is the phenomenon now posterior to the Fall, and we can only say, " An enemy hath done this." An enemy *hath* done this ; and most cunningly has he

wrested this sword from the hand of man, wherewith he ought to have fought the battle of right against wrong, and turned it against himself—in many cases, alas ! to his soul's destruction. And how has he set about this deadly work ?

First, by crushing down the instincts of truth. And the first result of this is, that men did not like to retain God in their knowledge. You have the whole philosophy of this marvellously worked out in Rom. i. There you see, in vers. 20-32, the result of this loss of the truth of God in the perversion of the human conscience, the moral sense of right and wrong ; for though they were without excuse, for the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, yet they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, but changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like to corruptible man, and even to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things, and therefore God gave them up to all uncleanness ; and yet even then there remained some moral sense, for they knew the judgment of God, " that they which commit such things are worthy of death," and, as our text tells us, although they had not the Law, yet they " show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

And, secondly, the loss of truth works upon conscience in another way. Just as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, so they do not like to know themselves, but, glancing merely superficially at themselves, and comparing themselves with others round about, they drift into a self-satisfied Pharisaism, when conscience becomes benumbed. Therefore the first thing the Holy Ghost has to do is to instruct their ignorant conscience, and,

throwing in upon it the light of truth, arouse it from its torpor. He brings back God to his knowledge, and the man begins to see God is the "Holy, holy, holy God;" and at the same time He reveals man to himself, and, with this twofold ray of truth playing upon him, man is aroused, and exclaims, "Woe is me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips: . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

But a second way in which "the enemy hath done this," has been by stifling reverence; and although man knows the holiness of God, and how far short he has fallen from it, he declares, "Tush! Thou God carest not for it," and so continually silencing the clamour of conscience, he succeeds in stopping his ears to its warning voice. Here, then, you have the case not so much of an ignorant as of an outraged conscience; and the Holy Spirit has to awake the conscience, by bringing before it the majesty of the Law and the power of our God. Oh, brethren, remember the conscience is a very sensitive and sacred thing. St. Paul would have us educate and instruct conscience—nay, we are responsible for doing so; but he would never have us go against conscience, even when conscience is weak, and conscience is mistaken. See in Rom. xiv., where St. Paul will not permit the strong to force the weak to do that which is contrary to their conscience. I am an ardent total abstainer, but I would not have my brother sign the pledge contrary to his conscience for a single moment. True, he is responsible for educating his conscience, and for examining whether it is in accord with eternal right; but he must not go contrary to conscience. Conscience, I say; not his own whim or pleasure, for which, alas! many confound it. Finally, brethren, "hold faith

and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith, have made shipwreck." But this conscience, this sense of moral obligation, is one of those instincts man has derived from God his Father, and upon which, degraded or perverted though it be, the Holy Spirit works in order to bring about the new birth.

THE WILL.

THE WILL.

“Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—REV. xxii. 17.

ONCE again I must remind you what is the general subject we are studying here upon Sunday morning. We are considering what is the effect of the Fall upon those instincts which man has derived from God, and which are not to be found in the lower animals, and which give man the right to regard God, not simply as the Creator, but as his Parent; for these instincts, as we have seen, have not been bestowed upon him by the fiat of a Creator, so much as by the communication of Himself by God, when He made man in His own image, and breathed into him the breath of life. We have already spoken of that instinct of truth, which makes men yearn to know what is beyond; of that instinct of reverence, which assures him that there is a Power above to whom he must bow; and of that instinct of the conscience, which is continually saying, “I ought,” as it looks onward to the future, or “I ought not to have done,” as it looks backward to the past.” To-day we come to the instinct of the will.

Now, here at once we come face to face with the great theological controversy which has raged for centuries

round the sovereignty of God and the will of man. It is impossible, of course, for us to enter into this controversy, and at the same time we cannot altogether ignore it. The worst of it is, that in all theological controversy the majority of men have a blind eye, and they put the telescope to that when they look at their opponents' arguments, and declare they can see nothing at all in them; while, on the other hand, they magnify out of all proportion that side of the truth for which they contend. Now, my brethren, if I may make my confession of faith once for all, I believe as certainly in the sovereignty of God as I do in the will of man.

Of course we must believe in the absolute sovereignty of God. We see it in nature. With whom took He counsel in creation? It was at His sovereign will the Himalayas raised their heads. It was at His sovereign will the depths of the ocean were dug deep. We see it in providence. "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" He gives or withholds the rain; causes one child to be born in a palace, another in a hovel. Nor has He abdicated His sovereignty in the sphere of grace. His purposes stand fast; His will it must be done. Not only must He be Sovereign, else there would be one who could successfully say Him nay, and He then would cease to be Supreme, and another would ascend the throne; but His character is such, that if He were not the Sovereign God, we should elect Him to be Sovereign, for we know His decrees are such as would be in accordance with perfect justice and with perfect love. But I believe also that man is a moral agent, endowed with

the instinct of will ; not a mere puppet in the hand of fate. We are not Mohammedans, and we do not believe in a Kismet from which there is no escape.

We acknowledge the harmony that must exist between the sovereignty of God and the will of man in nature ; as, for example, in the case of the farmer. We know he may plough in vain and sow in vain unless God grants the sunshine and the rain—that the harvest is absolutely in God's hands, and therefore we give Him thanks to-day ; but we also know that if the farmer therefore folds his hands, and neither ploughs nor sows, his barns will be empty in the harvest-time. Why, then, do we refuse this harmony in grace ? Not once or twice have I seen the anxious soul, deeply convinced of sin and need, on the point of yielding to the entreaties of Jesus Christ, when some one-sided doctrinaire has shrivelled up the desire with a " Well, child, when the Holy Spirit calls you then you will, but not before ; " as if the Holy Spirit were not calling her as loudly as He could—nay, compelling her to come in ! How wisely does our seventeenth Article declare, " As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God : So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust

them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation"!

We know, of course, that man is born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We know also, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God which showeth mercy." But we know also, that "if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine;" that God constantly appeals to the will of man: "I have put before you this day life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life;" that the Saviour weeps over rebellious Jerusalem in these words, "How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . but ye would not;" and that the Holy Spirit closes the Revelation of the will of God by throwing the door of salvation as wide open as it is possible: "~~He that~~ ~~any man~~ will, let him take the water of life freely." ~~I do~~ not ~~believe~~ one lost soul at the judgment-day will be able to plead, "I had no chance; salvation was not meant for me." If you ask me why the Queen is upon the throne, I reply in the words she insists should be on all her coins, "Dei Gratia"—by the grace of God. But, on the other hand, if you ask me why yonder criminal is in the cell, I dare not reply, by the will of God; but I say because he has done wrong, and I insist he is morally responsible, else you must not shut him up as a criminal. You may confine him as a lunatic, as one who is dangerous to society; but do not punish him as a criminal for what he had no power to avoid. No, these two things are quite compatible—the Divine sovereignty and the free agency of man; and herein consists the glory of God. He performs his purposes not by mere machines, but by living moral agents, who have this power of will. We all acknowledge that the

power of the statesmen, who moulds the will of the people, is of a higher order than the power of a blacksmith, who moulds a dead, resistless piece of iron to his purpose. So God carries out His own will, though liable to be crossed at every turn by the will of man.

Therefore we insist that there is an instinct of will in man. Now, I believe at first this will was an almost absolutely free will; in fact, in some respects, freer even than God's will, because will is determined by character. Now, there are some things God cannot will to do. He cannot will to tell a lie. He cannot will to be unjust, because the character of God imposes a fetter upon His will. Now, man at his creation is without these moral fetters. He could choose good or evil, which God could not, for His character obliges Him always to choose the good.

But whilst no moral fetters were imposed upon the will of man, fetters were imposed upon him as a creature; and here, of course, his will is conditioned in a way in which God's will is not. Though bounded by moral fetters, God's will as Creator is absolute. He could appear as an angel, as He did to Joshua; He could appear as a man, as He did in Jesus Christ. Not so man. He could never will to be an angel; he can only be what he is made to be. Man's individuality, the basis of his character and of his faculties, is given to him by his Creator, and no human being can attain a higher degree of perfection than has been planned for him in the possibilities of his existence. To one is given one talent, to another two, to another five. He can gain other five, or he may hide them in the earth; but the two-talent man can never be the five-talent man. Therefore, whilst there is a fundamental impress, which remains the same from birth to death, the

development from possibility to actual achievement may be normal or abnormal. And herein we differ from the beast. The life of the beast is the necessary unfolding of the life implanted in him at his birth. It moves along the predetermined lines ; but man is called upon to control, to overcome, to modify the instincts or impulses which were implanted within him. To him, therefore, is given this extraordinary power of saying " No " to these impulses.

But here it is right to say that my will is conditioned, not only by creation, but by heredity. There can be no doubt, for instance, but that the child of the drunkard finds it far more difficult to resist the drink than the child of the sober man ; and this is the awful responsibility every parent must bear in mind—that his life is transmitted to his offspring, and makes it easier or harder for him to do the right. Thus, it was by this law of heredity that Adam's sin was transmitted to the generations yet unborn, and rendered it harder for every son of man to refuse the evil and to choose the good.

But the will of man is conditioned also by his surroundings. This development of our personality, which we have received from creation and through heredity, is affected by two things—by assimilation and by production ; that is to say, by what we take in and by what we do. It is affected by what we take in. We breathe in our surroundings. " The man is, in more senses than one, what he feeds upon." Now, the beasts assimilate by instinct. Their instinct impels them to eat what is set before them if suitable, to reject it if not so. But man has to deliberate and to choose, and to weigh the arguments for and against, and finally to make up his mind ; and this not simply in regard to such things as meats and drinks,

but with regard to every other circumstance with which he is brought into contact; and what he thus assimilates strengthens or weakens his will to that which is good.

The will is also conditioned by the habits—that is to say, by what he does; for every victory makes the next victory more easy, every defeat makes the next defeat more certain. The drunkard who might have resisted the cup two years ago, finds it next to impossible to break off from his indulgence to-day.

Thus, then, as far as we can gather, was man made, with certain impulses and powers, but all subject to a will which was absolutely unconditioned, so far as moral considerations went, but which would be modified and acted upon by surroundings and by habits, and which would through heredity be transmitted impaired or strengthened to children and to children's children.

Two things, therefore, were put before man between which he was to choose—a life in God, and a life in the world independent of God. And there were implanted within him two impulses—one towards the world, which sought only for happiness, to appropriate as much as possible to one's self; the other towards God, which sought rather for blessedness, and which found its centre, not in self or in the world, but in God. Now, if the development of man had been normal, the worldly impulse would have been completely subject to the Godward impulse, and the great aim of man would have been the glory of God; and the will, choosing this impulse, would have been strengthened by the surroundings in which it now found itself, and by the habits which the continual choice of good would have formed, and so man would have transmitted to his children a will ever more and more inclined

to what is right. But, alas! man fell. He chose the worldly impulse, which led to a life centred either in the world or in self, and now the things which should have been for our wealth have become unto us an occasion of falling.

Man now absorbs the world. His habits are worldly, and therefore he transmits to his offspring a still further depraved will. And so evil men wax worse and worse; and one generation kills the prophets, and the next generation builds their sepulchres. But still fallen man has a will. He is still a self-characterizing creature, but it is no longer a free will; it is weakened by the past, conditioned by heredity, by his surroundings, and by his habits. And yet man is morally responsible for his character. He is not suffering blamelessly for the fault of others. He is himself voluntarily choosing new sins. And crippled though the will is, the impulses within him are not irresistible. He can weigh, he can consider, he can reject; but the more we give way the weaker does the will become. A man, for instance, when he leaves his office after business, has the power of will to choose whether he will go to his club or home to his wife, or do a dozen different things; but if we know something of that man's past life, we shall probably be able to say very accurately which course he will pursue.

Now see how the Spirit of God works upon the man to produce the new birth. The instinct of truth, which yearns to know the truth, has been crushed down; the instinct of reverence has been perverted, the instinct of conscience has been desperately outraged, and the instinct of the will has been paralyzed towards what is good, when the Holy Spirit of God begins to work upon the man, first by

strengthening the impulses towards good, by drawing him towards holier things. Oh, my brother, resist not the drawing of the Holy Spirit of God. And as the man yields, he finds himself in new surroundings, and the will for holier things increases, until, by the formation of habits of holiness, he goes from strength to strength, from glory to glory, until he is changed into the very image of Christ, the very perfect Man. My brother, the Holy Spirit of God is working upon you to-day; He is strengthening the impulses towards holiness, towards God. Yield to them, and they will become stronger and stronger; resist them, and the will becomes stronger towards evil, until you become gospel-hardened, and the grieved, rejected Spirit of God leaves you to the doom which your own will has chosen.

THE MORAL LIFE.

THE MORAL LIFE.

“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.”
—MATT. v. 45.

IT has always appeared to me that the spiritual history of the individual is very often the counterpart of the religious history of the world. To Abraham, God is almost as it were a guardian angel, hovering about his path and about his bed ; he had only to go outside his tent-door, and God was there. But as man learnt more of the majesty and holiness of God, the distance which separated man and God became greater. As with Israel at Mount Sinai, man removed and stood afar off. And the history of the Old Testament is, from this point of view, a history of the increasing distance between man and God. The God who spake to all the people on Mount Sinai, speaks only now through priest and prophet ; and the intervals between His revelations become longer, until after Malachi He is silent for four hundred years. The glory which was visible to all in the pillar of fire is restricted to the Shekinah in the holy of holies, till at last it is withdrawn altogether during the Captivity. And so the distance between God and man increases, until Jesus comes to reveal to us the Father, and man, without losing one iota of the revelation of majesty, holiness, and truth, is once more brought back to God. So

is it with the individual. Your little child who lisps at his mother's knee—

“Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me!
Bless Thy little lamb to-night”—

thinks of God as “just over there.” Draw aside the curtains of the night, and your little child expects to see Jesus. But as he grows in years, your child gets further away from God. God is not so near to him in his school-days, except now and then when conscience awakens fears, when he removes and stands still further off. He is in his Sinai-days, learning the majesty and holiness of God—how “He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” But if he refuses to obey, the distance still increases, until the voice of God is heard but feebly, and less frequently; until sometimes, alas! there is a long period of silence, and God neither speaks to man nor man to God. Happy then if the revelation of Jesus Christ bursts upon the soul, and the man learns that God is his Father-God; then, having learnt in the school of trial and temptation the holiness of God, he is once more brought back to the Father's home, and rests in the Father's love.

Now I want to take up this revelation of God as the Father, and see what influence it should have on different departments of the human life. To-day, what should be its influence on the moral life of man.

1. The Fatherhood of God is the basis of Christian morality. It is most refreshing to turn from the speculations of ethical philosophers to the simple teaching of Jesus Christ. The first question which you will find discussed in every treatise on the philosophy of ethics is the basis of morality—Why is right right, and wrong

wrong? Is it because of some inherent quality in themselves, or because of the arbitrary decree of one who has so ordained, and who might just as easily have ordained that what we now consider wrong to be right, and what we consider right to be wrong? But with Jesus right is right, because it is like His Father; and wrong is wrong, because it is unlike Him. There is no word about righteousness being right upon abstract principles or upon the ground of utility. You must, in Matt. v. 44, "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may prove yourselves to be the children of your Father: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, He sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust." You must, therefore, "be perfect, as your Father which in heaven is perfect." You will notice here also the difference in the motives brought forward in the Old Testament and in the New. The highest motive in the Old Testament seems to be drawn from human sympathy, because of liability to common suffering. Cf. Lev. xix. 34, "Thou shalt love the stranger as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt;" but here it is, "Love your enemies, that ye may be the children of your Father."

What a warmth this gives to the ethical teaching of Jesus Christ! He does not lift up a scroll as an imperial proclamation, to break which is to be doomed; nor does He give us merely an example which we must follow as best we can; nor does He argue with us that it will be better for us if we thus obey His will. But He saith to us, "God is your Father—*noblesse oblige*—act as His children." Jesus Christ goes to the prodigal and points him, not so much to his misery, as to his Father whom he has grieved.

He would say to men, "You have been made in the image of God; see how terribly you have fallen." Yes, sonship in the hands of Jesus Christ awakens conviction of sin. Tell me which parable produces most powerfully hatred for our sin. Is it the parable of the husbandmen in the vineyard withholding the fruits thereof from the rightful lord? Is it the marriage supper of the son, and the ungenerous excuses of the bidden guests? Is it the selfishness of the hard-hearted Dives, who spurns the Lazarus at his door; or the callousness of priest and Levite, who pass by on the other side whilst a fellow-Jew is dying in the ditch? All bring before us sin in different aspects, alike contemptible and mean; but do they give us such a true picture of the guilt of sin as the parables in Matt. xxi. and Luke xv., where sin is pictured as a disobedience to a Father's will, as a revolt against a Father's love, and the expostulation of the Father, "Where is My honour?" fills our hearts with shame?

2. Sonship inspires hope. If sonship convicts of sin, it also inspires hope. If God is my Father, then I can return; yes, not only will He receive me, sinful, prodigal child though I be, but there is that in me which makes it possible for me to come back. And here we come to the mystery of the new birth. It is the reawakening in the soul's consciousness of the Divine sonship, and the implanting in him new tastes and desires, making him love that which before he hated, and hate that which before he loved. No doubt, in Gen. i., "God made man in His own image;" and as we have seen in Gen. ii. 7, man, by virtue of that inbreathing of the breath of life from God Himself, holds a different relationship to God to the rest of His creation. God is His Parent, and not simply His Creator.

But, alas! this image was crushed down by earthliness and sin. When the crust was thinnest, then better thoughts and desires, remnants of His pristine likeness to God, would sometimes spring up, but unrecognized and unknown, and feeble at the very best; and if not awakened by the Spirit of God, dying, until, like Simon or the Jews, the man becomes the child of the devil, or, as our Lord Jesus Christ has to declare concerning Judas Iscariot, a very devil himself; that is, the man no longer does evil because he is tempted, but becomes devilish, and does evil without provocation. But until that time there are still the remnants of the Divine sonship which form an *ἀφόρμῃ*, or fulcrum, on which the Holy Ghost can work, and bring about the new birth, or the true sonship of God. There is, we maintain, something in man which is not in bird, or beast, or devil, on which the Holy Spirit can work to produce the new birth; and this something is from God—not made by the fiat of a Creator, but implanted by the impartation of Himself; and therefore we say God is in this sense the Father of even unconverted man, whereas He is but the Creator of the rest of His creation. Therefore there is hope for man; he is capable of eternal life, and to become the son of God in very truth. This new birth is the reception of Jesus Christ (John i. 12), through the power of the Holy Ghost (John iii. 5), and it generally takes place at the cross of Christ, where He has not only atoned for our past sins, but where He so signally manifests the love of God. I am startled, then, to discover I am a child of God, made in His image, with this purpose, that I should grow into His likeness. But how fearfully I have fallen! Surely there is now no hope; I must be altogether cast away. No, Jesus loves and Jesus died. The Father

welcomes home. I will be God's child, then, and though utterly unworthy, live for Him who loved me.

3. Sonship gives power, because it provides me with a new motive, namely, love; and this is the motive which can alone be acceptable to God. We must obey Him not simply because we ought, or because it is to our advantage, but because we love Him, and therefore we keep His commandments. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And why "must"? Just because I am His child. It is my meat and drink to do my Father's will, just because He is my Father. How thoroughly was this the motive power of the life of Jesus Christ! He would not antedate His Father's hour by a single moment, even to please His mother or His brethren. Every word He spake He received from His Father, every act He performed was commanded Him from above, and His last words in the chamber before He went forth to die were, "As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence" (John xiv. 31). What absolute obedience do we see in Him, because there was perfect love and implicit trust! And what jealousy has the true child of God for his Father's honour! No sooner has he said, "Our Father which art in heaven," than at once he prays, "Hallowed be Thy name." Therefore the first incident in the life of Jesus Christ was naturally the casting out of the temple the buyers and sellers who were defiling His Father's house; and the first command He gives us in the Sermon on the Mount is enforced by the same consideration: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;" and the one desire of His life is summed up in the memorable prayer of John xii. 28,

“Father, glorify Thy name.” This, then, is the revelation of Jesus Christ. I must do right, because I must be my Father’s child ; but, alas ! I have so sadly fallen, and yet there is hope. I can, I will. Can you picture to yourselves the crowds dispersing from that green hill beyond Capernaum after that Sermon on the Mount ? No wonder they were astonished at His doctrine. He had injected a new thought into their souls ; he had called God their Father. Was it true ? He had brought the conception to bear upon their daily life ; they were to live not as criminals waiting for the coming of the judge, not as subjects cringing before a monarch, but as children confiding in their Father. Can you fancy how those men went home that night—new thoughts swelling in their hearts, new possibilities opening up before their eyes, and new resolves taking possession of their wills ? So may we go home to-day, determined to live as the children of our Father who is in heaven.

THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

“The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.”—JOHN v. 20.

WE were on Sunday last considering the influence of the Fatherhood of God upon the moral life. To-day we want to examine what should be the influence of this great truth which the Lord Jesus Christ came to reveal to man upon the intellectual life. Now, when we speak of the intellectual life, we speak of that which distinguishes man from the lower creation. We may talk of the intelligence of a dog, or of the instinct of a fowl, but not of their intellectual life. I know, alas! there are some men who know nothing of an intellectual life. They live mere animal existences: satisfy their body, and they are quite content; give them food and drink, and they want nothing more. They make up so much man-power; but machinery is quickly supplanting them, for it costs less to keep and is easier to keep in order.

There are others who pose as intellectual men; they dissect beetles and classify fronds, and use long Latin words, and the ignorant multitude gape upon them as if they were prodigies of wisdom. But this is not truly intellectual life. The true intellectual life is that which to the lower creatures is absolutely incomprehensible. It is

the reaching out after the unseen, after the unknown. The mind of man, however far it may penetrate in any direction, comes at last face to face with a barrier which it cannot pass; and yet it feels that there is something beyond, and therefore it beats against the bars. It is not so with man's bodily appetites; give them food and drink or exercise, and they are satisfied, and any surfeit produces nausea or tedium. But the intellectual appetite is only quickened by exercise to demand still more. And not only so, but the mind feels that what is beyond bears a very intimate relationship to what we see; and therefore we cannot really understand even what we see, for the key to the true understanding thereof lies in what we do not know. Therefore the mind is continually going up to the veil which hides the unknown from us, and tries and longs to push it back a little further. Now, this is the true intellectual life, and this is a life which is not felt by animals, nor is it felt by men who live as animals. Now, has the revelation of Jesus Christ that God is our Father any bearing on this life? For if the revelation be true, it should meet all our wants. It must not only help us in our duties and solace us in our sorrows; it must also guide us in these dark, mysterious paths. Can it? I think it can.

1. In the first place, it assures us of the perfect truthfulness of what we already know. There is in the present day a resurrection of the Euripidean difficulty. The Greek poet brings before us two characters who puzzle over the question, Which is the true waking state—the dreaming state, or what is commonly known as the waking state? For the impressions in the commonly called dreaming state are as vivid, and the sensations of joy or sorrow as acutely felt, as in the commonly called waking state. Which, then,

is the true dreaming state, and which is the true waking? So, to-day, the agnostic would tell us we really know nothing; that all knowledge is but relative, or conditional—we know nothing “in themselves;” that what we call yellow may really be red, and what we term virtuous may really be a vice. A young lady of my acquaintance was startled at being told by an oculist, when he examined her eyes, that she had never really seen a circle; that all her circles were really ovals. And so we are startled by the agnostic telling us that we really know nothing; that all our circles may be really ovals; that the terms “soul,” “conscience,” “sin,” “punishment,” are but figures, but that we cannot know whether the things really exist or not. Now, here it is that the revelation of the Father comes to my help. If God is a Father, I do not think He will suffer me to be so deceived. These intuitions are indexes of the truth, and therefore I can work upon and from them. If God has implanted in man an instinct of an hereafter—an instinct that sin brings punishment, and that obedience is right—I can go on trustfully, and believe there are some great verities behind these instincts; in fact, I believe, as our text tells us, that “the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth;” and though this refers, undoubtedly, primarily to the Lord Jesus Christ, it refers also to every son, and in proportion as he is a son and trusts his Father. And, therefore, when I am asked how do I know these things—these fundamental conceptions—I do not reply that I reached them by searching, or by discovery, or that I received them by tradition, or that experience shows them to be true; but I simply reply, “My Father showed them to me.” I came—teachably, humbly, prayerfully—as a son, and I know my Father will never

deceive me. My brother, do you want to know? Come as a child, come as a son, and the Father who loveth His children will teach you all things. Do you call this bigotry? Well, we must endure the charge. But have you noticed how St. John, the apostle of love, always speaks of truth in the abstract? There is no uncertainty or hesitation with him, and therefore we maintain that it is quite possible to have the truest charity to all men and yet to be certain as to the truth, for we have it revealed to us by our Father in heaven. We believe in the Holy Ghost, and we know that when He came He was to teach us all things, and to guide us into all truth; and therefore our trust in the Fatherhood of God makes us certain that the revelation He has given us in His Word will not deceive us, and that the legitimate longings of our souls will most assuredly be satisfied.

2. The Fatherhood of God will never permit the intellectual pursuit after truth to degenerate into a mere academical discussion. Knowledge must be translated into action. Look at our text: "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." Confer also John viii. 32, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;" or John xvii. 17, "Sanctify them through Thy truth," and many other passages, all of which show us that truth is not to be debated about or admired, but to have a practical effect upon the heart, the life, the soul. What is it which disappoints us so much in "intellectual" men? Is it not the "unassimilated intellectuality—knowledge not pressed

into character"? But the man who knows all about the stars, and the immensities of space, has a mean little soul, puffed up with its own conceit, but with very little sympathy for his fellow-men.

Now, the Father is far more anxious for the training of our character than for satisfying our intellectual curiosity. The Bible was not written to satisfy our curiosity. It was written to mould our character. Here is all the difference between the education of a father and the lectures of a crammer. The father cares for the character of his son; the crammer simply wants to store the mind with certain facts for a certain examination. Now, God is a Father, and therefore His revelations have always a moral tendency. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

3. The Fatherhood of God gives patience in the presence of the still unknown. The Bible never undertakes to explain all mysteries; but we are constantly met with the calm assertion, "What I do Thou knowest not now." And even Christ was content to wait. Look at Mark xiii. 32: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." We know how He longed to see of the travail of His soul. We might fancy that if there was one thing which the Son longed to know, it would be that day when He would receive His reward in the adoring allegiance of the millions whom He had redeemed, and whom He would present faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy. But no; He was content to wait. True, He did not know, but the Father did, and that was enough for Him. So there are many mysteries which I must be

content to leave : mysteries in the physical world which I cannot fathom, such as the beginning of matter, and the infinity of space ; mysteries in the spiritual world, such as the origin of evil, the meeting-point of Divine sovereignty and of man's free will, and of the future portion of the wicked ; but I can trust my Father.

A little child was playing in the garden, and the crabbed old gardener came up to her and said, "Cissie, your father is going to kill a man to-morrow." "Oh no, William, I am sure he is not!" "Yes, he is, to-morrow morning, at eight o'clock, up there on the hill close to the grey old prison." "Oh no, William, I'm sure he is not! My father is too good and kind and gentle to do that." And yet the crabbed old gardener had stabbed that young and tender heart; and when the father came home that night there was no little Cissie running with bounding joy to meet him and give him his welcome home, and when he called her she came with downcast eyes, and took her seat silently upon his knee. "Why, Cissie, what's the matter?" and then the pent-up sobs could no longer be restrained. "Father, it is not true, is it? You are not going to kill a man to-morrow? William says you are." The father was sheriff for the county, and had to superintend to-morrow morning the execution of a murderer, and it had been haunting him like a nightmare for the last three weeks. He was angry with the man who had so cruelly slandered him to his child, and yet he saw it was quite impossible for him to explain his duty to the little one, so he simply said, "Cissie, can't you trust father?" and the little one smothered all her doubts in her dear father's breast. And so, when men come and perplex me with life's mysteries, I simply answer, "I can

trust my Father, and throw myself upon His character and His heart." Thus the Fatherhood of God influences the intellectual life. It assures us of the truthfulness of what we do know. It reminds us Revelation is not simply to inform the mind, but to purify the heart. And, lastly, it gives me patience amidst the mysteries of life.

LONELINESS.

LONELINESS.

"Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone : and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."—JOHN xvi. 32.

I SUPPOSE we are all of us acquainted with the astronomical fact that we have never seen the other side of the moon. For it follows that as the moon revolves upon its own axis in the same period of time that it takes to move round the earth, the same side is always turned towards this earth. We have only seen one side. Our astronomers have measured its mountains, named its craters, and mapped out its surface ; but only on one side. Of the other side we know absolutely nothing, except that when this side is flooded with light the other side is dark, and that when this side is dark the other side is bright with the glory of the sun.

Now, so it is with ourselves. There is one side of our life that the world can see and criticize or admire ; but there is another side of our life of which the world knows absolutely nothing, except that very often, when this side that the world can see is in the sunlight, the other side is very dark ; and when this side seems to be very dark, on the other side there may be joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, I am not speaking of hypocrites—of those who intentionally wear a mask in order to deceive. I am speaking of the universal law—the law that is recognized by the wise man in Prov. xiv. 10: “The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy.”

Now, this is a very strange thing, this isolation of the human soul. It reminds us of that holy of holies in the old Jewish tabernacle, into which the high priest alone, and that only once a year, could penetrate. The great crowd of worshippers were in the outer court, and a certain few entered into the holy place, but into the holy of holies none but the high priest could enter. It is so in every one of our lives; there is a certain fringe of our life which is open to the world; men coming and going see what is there taking place. A certain privileged few are permitted to enter the inner chamber; but there is another chamber still into which no human eye can see, which we must enter by ourselves alone. This loneliness of the human soul is something very strange. It is only those who are true men that realize it. There are some men who never seem to be lonely; they live merely superficial lives, and never know their inmost selves; there is no one of whom they know so little as themselves. These are superficial men. There are other men who, though they may appear indifferent to their fellows, yet do know something of this loneliness, and, knowing the bitterness of this loneliness, they crave for the sympathy of the world. Take such a man, for instance, as Elijah. You may fancy that he never knew what it was to be lonely when you see him standing upon Carmel—he seems perfectly self-contained; and yet we know how, when face to face with God, he bewailed his loneliness: “I, even I only, am left; and

they seek my life, to take it away." Or take such a man as Joseph. You see him dealing with his brethren, and say, "Here is a model governor—a man able to take his stand by himself; a man who never feels this loneliness which we men feel." Yet Holy Scripture lifts for us the veil, and you see Joseph weeping over his brethren and yearning over them with love. Or take such a man as Moses. As you see him leading his six hundred thousand warriors through the wilderness, you say, "There is a strong man, a rock-like man; a man like those granite peaks by which he is surrounded, who can stand by himself alone." Yet we know, when Moses got alone with God, how he felt his loneliness. "I, even I only. The burden is too heavy for myself alone." And then, if you take the Great Man, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself,—was there ever a more lonely man than the Lord Jesus Christ? It was not that He retired from the haunts of men and kept Himself aloof in some Pharisaic seclusion, but whilst living among men the Lord Jesus Christ lived an intensely lonely life in this world.

Now, this is a strange problem, which we ought to consider. How is it that a man driven into himself, and in proportion as he is driven deeper into himself,—how is it that that man, having this intense loneliness, is at the same time so constantly yearning for sympathy?

Now, this feeling of isolation grows. A very little child does not know anything of this loneliness. You fathers and mothers are able to understand what takes place in the child's mind. The child's soul seems like the surface of some sea, and every passing wind reveals to you the state of affairs. But, as your boy grows more truly alive to his own proper self, this feeling of loneliness grows upon

him. Take the young boy at school. Hitherto he has said his prayers and drunk in every Bible story at his mother's knee. But now the boy, perhaps by some doubt injected from without, perhaps by working out some problem by himself, begins to have the first spectre of doubt. The boy is horror-struck! The doubt seems almost in his mind to be sin. He longs to have some one to whom he may communicate his doubts, some one who will be able to understand him, and to whom he may speak, and who will not upbraid him. But while yearning for this sympathy, and for one to whom he can communicate these doubts, he is driven deeper and deeper into himself, and the danger is that, lest brooding over these doubts, he should be building up a kind of iron wall between himself and those able to help him. Or take a young boy whose heart is stirred. He has been in darkness, living a careless life. Suddenly he becomes convinced of the realities of life, convinced of the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His claims, and the cross in all its power is brought before him. The boy's heart is changed. He feels that his life must now be different. He feels the Holy Spirit working within him, and showing him the responsibilities and privileges of this great gift of life. The great danger is that this boy, now being converted, should begin to shrink away, having been forced to enter into his deeper self, and there hide himself, and be afraid lest any one should know what is taking place in his heart and spirit. Or take some woman's case. The young girl has hitherto been at school, and been as happy, joyous, and careless as the day is long. But now she has gone out into society, and attentions are paid her to which she has hitherto been a stranger. New thoughts begin to stir within her heart,

and she longs for some one who will guide and direct her. The danger is lest she should crush down those feelings near her heart, and find a wall of separation growing up between herself and those to whom she ought to trust herself. Here we parents oftentimes make mistakes. Even the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ made this mistake. When He was a boy of twelve years of age, with strange stirrings within His heart, His mother could not understand it. "Why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing!" But she understood not His saying. And so oftentimes parents do not understand their children. They don't understand those first throbbings of the mind, or will, or heart, and therefore sometimes a wall of separation grows up between the child and the parent, the parent resenting that the child should hold anything back, and demanding of him to know the secret he is withholding from him, and the thoughts that are stirring in his heart. The child, half afraid of himself, his yearnings for sympathy chilled, is driven back into loneliness and solitude.

Oh, Christian parents, you little know the thoughts that are stirring in some of your children's hearts; how your children are being driven into that lonely place, and yet at the same time are yearning for sympathy, and for some one to whom they may open up their hearts. Do you wonder, mother, that your child does not make a confidant of you? Perhaps you never trained her so to do. You could not be bothered by her petty troubles when she was a little thing, and now she does not care to bother you with her greater troubles. If you had been more sympathetic over the broken doll, she would gladly have come to you with her broken heart. Only, remember, the sympathy must be

unobtrusive, and the confidences must be treated as absolutely sacred; and even then, remember, there is a limit which not even you can pass. Happy the parent who has perfect confidence in his child, even when the child can no longer communicate his thoughts; and happy the child who, when constrained to be dumb because he has seen a vision of the Lord, yet knows his father and his mother understand him, and are not seeking to enter into his holiest, and yet are praying for him outside!

But this loneliness, which we see beginning to stir within the heart of the child, we see more and more intensely in men as they grow older. There is the loneliness of temptation. Some of you business men know that. Some of you know what it is to have two lines of conduct put before you, and you have to choose. What would you give to talk over your difficulty with some true friend? But you feel that the decision must be made by yourself. God only knows the struggle that oftentimes takes place in that Gethsemane garden before the man is able to say, "Let Thy will be done," and give up that which seems for his present advantage, because he knows that the voice of God and of duty has called him in a different direction. Then there is the loneliness of sorrow. Have you not known what that is? You love to know that there are those who are feeling for you, but you want, too, that their sympathy should be unobtrusive. "Mother, I don't know how it is that Mrs. —— says that I so comfort her. She has lost her little girl, just my age. I like to sit with her, and she lays her head on my shoulder, and I feel her tears trickling down on my cheek, and she says I have so comforted her; but I cannot understand it, as I do not say anything." But I can understand it. If the child had been able to say any-

thing, the comfort would have been spoilt. It was very kind of those Jews to come from Jerusalem to mourn with Mary and Martha for their brother Lazarus ; but I can quite understand how Mary would often rush off to the grave to weep there. It is very kind of friends to send all those lovely wreaths, and you would not be without them ; but have you not sometimes felt as if you could tear them all to pieces, if they would only leave you alone ?

And then, brethren, there is the loneliness of sin. You know, some of you, what that is. You know what it is when you have been overcome with evil, how you long to confess it to some one ; and yet you are afraid lest any one should know it. I can quite understand that story of Eugene Aram. He has murdered a man, and everywhere he goes the storm whispers his crime, the leaves of the forest whisper out his name. I can quite understand how he fancies the officers of the law are after him. I can quite understand how the man goes up to a tree, and how he whispers to the tree his foul crime ; how he detailed the crime to his young pupils, reminding them all the time it was only a dream, and was not true. There is the loneliness and yearning for sympathy, and yet at the same time the fear lest any one should know the secret.

Now, this loneliness is imperative. It is quite true that God has given to us certain very precious unions to minimize it ; but, nevertheless, it is imperative. There is the union of family life—a blessed union. God has appointed family life, that it should be as it were a little dockyard, where the little vessel should be equipped and kept until it is launched out upon the ocean. There is the Church union—a blessed union—where God has taken out these very lonely ones in families, that they may find in the

company of God's people that sympathy which is denied them in their homes. There is the union of man and wife. The spirit of union should be so close that they may be able to enter into one another's joys and sorrows. But there is an inner arcana into which none can enter. Now, why is this? We are so accustomed to find that every yearning of the human soul is so truly met by the providence of God, that it seems strange that there should be this continual drifting into loneliness, and yet this craving for sympathy. Why is it? We can give but one answer, and that is, "Sin."

There was a terrible disintegrating power in sin. When man fell, it was just as if you had a handful of mercury, and you threw your mercury down upon some deal board, and the mercury is not only separated from your hand, but is now split up into different globules. So it was when man fell: he was not only separated from God, but from his fellow-men. As soon as Adam fell, there was a wall of separation between man and wife. And so it has continued. Ever since there has been this yearning for sympathy, and yet this suspicion of man for his brother-man. Now, because this was one of the results of sin, and because the Lord Jesus Christ, when He came down to this earth, came to bear all the results of sin, it was necessary that He should bear, in a very remarkable degree, this result of sin. He bore shame—one result of sin—death, separation from God, and awful loneliness; for these were all the results of sin. And so at the cross; and not only there, but all through His life, there was this awful loneliness. The Lord Jesus Christ, right away from the age of twelve—when His mother did not understand Him; and from Nazareth, where His brethren did not understand

Him—knew this loneliness. And not even His disciples were able to enter into His thoughts. When He spoke of a kingdom, they thought of an earthly kingdom. When He spoke of a cross, they said, "That be far from Thee, Lord." And so right on to the end, when they all forsook Him and fled, and the three chosen ones fell asleep in the garden. And when lifted up on the cross He was alone—awfully alone. Yes, "ye shall be scattered, and shall leave Me alone." He was the Scapegoat in the wilderness. See the poor victim left alone. He has been taken into a land not inhabited, a land of isolation; the man who conducted it has withdrawn, and the goat is left alone, utterly alone. Thus Jesus Christ bore this awful solitude of man in its penal aspect. But not only does He bear this solitude of man, but He has taught you and me how we may bear it. For when Jesus Christ bears the consequences of sin, it is not that you and I may never bear them; for we must. Does sin bring shame? We must feel the shame. Does sin bring death? We must die. Does sin bring isolation? You and I must feel this awful solitude. But Jesus Christ has robbed the consequences of sin of their bitterest sting—the wrath of God. It makes all the difference whether you suffer the punishment of sin as a forgiven or an unforgiven man. David is forgiven. "The Lord has put away thy sin." Nevertheless the child must die; and the truly repentant sinner is perfectly willing to bear the consequences of sin, so long as he is assured of God's love. And this is what the cross of Christ has done. It assures us God feels for us, God loves us; for there we see our God putting Himself alongside of us, and bearing the consequences of His people's sins.

Now, it is quite possible for you to say, "I will not go

into that secret place. I will not face this loneliness, or bow myself to bear this consequence of human guilt." That is why many men live worldly lives. Some men can never bear to be alone; they must be off into society. Such men will never enter into themselves. And you may say, "I won't. The veil is lifted high enough to show me that there is something beyond which I do not like to see, and so I will not go into that holy place." And you may say so. You may say so until sickness comes upon you, until some tremendous sin comes and startles you, until you are driven into that lonely place; perhaps you may be able to say so even unto death. But you will not be able to say it for ever. And you will not cheat sin of its wages; and if you will not face the loneliness here, you will have to face it at last. One of my ideas of hell is the awful loneliness of hell. I believe there will be a grand centripetal force in heaven—the life of perfect trust. In heaven, you and I will never be ashamed to open up our hearts. In heaven, you and I will never have any secrets from one another. But if you are in hell, there will be the awful loneliness of hell. I believe in hell every lost spirit will gather any shred of covering round about itself, and will flee from its fellow-men, afraid to know them or be known by them. I can quite understand Dante's idea of a spirit hiding away from spirit. There is the awful loneliness of hell, the loneliness of fear and suspicion, the fear lest any one should know. There will be the eternal shame of hell.

But Jesus Christ has taught us how to face it. Not only has He borne the penal aspects of loneliness, but He has taught you and me how to face it. Courage, brother; face that loneliness. You may find abominations and

iniquities there ; as you go deeper and deeper into yourself, you will see more and more of your own sin and weakness. But shrink not back, brother ; go right into the deepest solitude, the inner hidden arcana of your own being. "Courage !" Jesus Christ says ; and then in the second place He says, "I will be with you." Just as the high priest entered into the holy place, and took the blood and sprinkled it, and took incense and perfumed that dark and hidden place, so Jesus Christ will go with you into your inmost soul, and with His blood purge your sins away, and perfume it with His own merits. Jesus Christ will go with you. Be not afraid. Be a man. Do not live merely superficial lives, surface lives, the life which the world sees. Pierce deeper into your own self. Do not be afraid. You will find sin and abominations—I know you will ; but Jesus Christ says, "Courage !" Go into these deepest things, and as you go, remember, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end."

PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it.”—GEN. xli. 15.

TOSSING upon his couch of down, Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, was sorely troubled because of the visions of the night. In his dream he stood by the bank of the river Nile, and saw seven fat kine come from out the river and proceed to feed upon the pasture-land upon the river's brink ; and soon after, seven other kine, lean-fleshed and ill-favoured, came up and proceeded to eat up the seven fat kine. And Pharaoh awoke. And again he dreamed, and in his dream there came up seven good ears of corn, growing upon one stalk ; and seven other ears of corn, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprang up, and these seven bad ears ate up the seven good ears. And so Pharaoh awoke ; and perplexed as to what was the meaning of his dream, he sent for all his wise men, to see if they could make known to him the interpretation thereof. But they could not. Then it was that Pharaoh's butler be-thought himself of a poor, pale Hebrew boy that he had once met in the dungeon when he was suffering for his misdeeds, and he wondered whether the poor, pale boy could make known to the king the interpretation of his dream. Joseph accordingly was sent for. And as he came

into the royal court and listened to the story of the strange images which had floated before the king as he lay asleep, he disclaimed at once any claim to superior wisdom on his part ; but, fully believing God would enable him to give the key of the mystery to the king, he proceeded to make known to him the interpretation of his dream.

Now, my brethren, I have dreamed a dream, and my dream is very similar to that of Pharaoh, King of Egypt ; and I believe that every one in this congregation has also dreamed a dream. Some of us have not taken much notice of our dreams ; we have tried to put them on one side or to forget them. But I want to call to remembrance One in your own past history who may perhaps unravel these dreams and show the interpretation thereof ; for some of us have been sorely troubled by our dreams, perplexed as to what to make of them, and what we ought to do. And perhaps this One whom we summon from our own past history may be able to advise us in this matter.

I have dreamed a dream, and my dream is very similar to that of Pharaoh, King of Egypt. I have dreamed all about those seven fat kine. I have dreamed, too, all about those seven good ears of corn. I have dreamed, and I suppose every young man has dreamed, that there is a good time coming. I would not give much for the young man who did not have some such dream as that. I suppose every curate believes that it is just possible that he may become Archbishop of Canterbury, and that every soldier believes that there is a marshal's batôn somewhere in his knapsack. Every young clerk is looking forward to the time when he may become head of the counting-house, and every young apprentice that she may become head of the department. We have all dreamed some such dreams as that. I would

not give much for the man who did not start in life with the determination that he will one day find himself at the very top of the tree. I say, thank God for our dreams. But if they are only dreams, and lead to no action, they are worse than foolish. But if you start with these dreams, and these dreams are incentives to your purpose in life, then, I say, thank God for these dreams. This young man Joseph had a dream. Years before he dreamed that sun, moon, and stars should bow down to him, and he never forgot that dream; although he had strange adversities, and had to go through strange trials, he never forgot that dream. He was taken away to a foreign land and became a scullion in Potiphar's kitchen; but he did his work so thoroughly and honestly, that very soon Joseph rose to be steward in Potiphar's house. Then, after he was so grossly maligned, he did not give all up in despair. The man who had dreamed such dreams could never pine away in a dungeon. And he did his work in the dungeon so thoroughly that the jailor recognized his worthiness, and soon made him chief jailor in the prison. There was a divinity stirring within the man. He felt that he was born to higher things, and he was determined that sun, moon, and stars should bow down to him. Thank God, if you have such dreams as that. You have come to London with the determination to succeed. You know what your father gave up for your education. You know how the family scraped that they might start you fairly in life; and you have determined that, God helping you, they shall yet have cause to thank God for the self-denial they showed for you. You have dreamed some such dream as this.

But, then, this is only half the dream. After he had dreamed about the seven fat kine and the seven good ears

of corn, Pharaoh dreamed about the seven thin kine and the seven blasted ears of corn. And I have had that dream. I have dreamed that after success there may come sorrow, there may come trial, and there may come difficulties. I have dreamed that after there has been worldly success there may come the sick-bed, the loss of friends—there will come death itself. Yes! I have dreamed about those seven thin kine, and those seven blasted ears of corn. And the worst of it is, I cannot get rid of this part of the dream. It perplexes me and troubles me. You may bring your instruments of music and try to lull me to sleep, but I cannot get rid of this dream. You may tell me it is the nightmare of a disordered brain, or the result of some early nervous shock. But the thought comes to me again and again—supposing the thin kine eat up the fat kine? supposing those ears of corn leave no vestige of the good ears of corn? I toss to and fro, and want to know what all this means. It is a hazy dream, but there is something about it I cannot get rid of. Those thin ears of corn must mean something; and then—what then?

Now, it is just at this period that the butler begins to speak, and says, "I do remember my faults this day." And I look back into the past, and I see some one answering to that pale, thin boy in Pharaoh's gaol. I remember One who in many respects is like unto Joseph. You have doubtless oftentimes traced the resemblance between the type and antitype. You have seen Him, the beloved of His Father, come to seek His brethren's welfare, yet despised and hated by them, and sold by them to strangers. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." You have seen Him living a blameless life in the land of sorrow, terribly tempted, but coming scathless through the tempta-

tion; nevertheless most grossly maligned and falsely accused, thrown into the dungeon, and there lying between two malefactors, one of whom is condemned, the other of whom is acquitted, and at last raised from the prison-house to the throne, and feeding the brethren who erstwhile sold Him to the strangers. Now, this is the One whom I would conjure up in your memory to-day; One whom we have neglected and spurned.

Alas! I remember how I dreamed a dream. I thought I was as a cluster of grapes in the grasp of the Almighty, that the great day of His wrath was come, and I was sore afraid, for I was helpless and undone; but He came in to me in my sorrow, asked the reason of my grief, and by His sympathy drew from me the story of my fears. He never spake lightly of my faults, but still He gave me assurance of pardon and of restoration into favour, and told me I should once more bring the wine of joy to the King's own lips. I remember the vows I made when He spake to me so gently when I was in the prison-house. I remember how lovingly He spoke to me, and how I vowed—and I meant it—that if God did deliver me out of that trial, I would remember him. But I remember my faults this day. Two long years have passed, and I have forgotten all about Joseph, all about those vows made in times of trouble, all about those professions of attachment—that Confirmation vow. Alas! how many years have passed and that vow has so seldom been performed? "I do remember my faults this day."

Why have I forgotten those vows? I suppose, if you asked the butler, he would say, "I have been so busy, I have not had time to remember. When I got back to my department I found so many duties to be performed

that it slipped my memory." Oh, men, have not some of us to plead the same excuse with regard to Jesus Christ? When we were upon a sick-bed, when we were down in the depths of despair, then we found time to make our vows; but now we have been exalted, we have been so busy, and there have been so many things to do, so many things to engage our attention, that we have forgotten all about Him. Or perhaps, if the butler had been honest, he might have been obliged to make another excuse; he might have said, "Yes, you know it is one thing to consort with Joseph when he and I were prisoners in a dungeon, but it is quite a different thing now I am exalted back to my butlership." Perhaps he was a little ashamed of Joseph. It was one thing to receive Joseph when he was fast bound in misery and in iron, but quite a different thing to acknowledge that prisoner when standing face to face with Pharaoh.

And if we were honest, ought not we to confess the same thing? It was all very well to kneel down with the clergyman when he came to visit me when I was sick, but quite a different thing to take my stand for Christ in the counting-house. However, the time came when the butler could not but remember his faults that day. And Pharaoh the king was so perplexed by those visions of the night, so perplexed as to the possible evil that might come out of his dream, that the butler was obliged and constrained to mention Joseph. And at last Joseph was brought. And what did he say? Joseph said exactly what Jesus Christ says to us dreaming men and women to-day. Jesus Christ says to us, Your dreams are quite true. Young man, put out all your powers, use all your talents, rise as God shall help you to rise; if you can do so by honest

means, rise to the highest place of influence among your fellow-men, and use all those powers of body and mind for the service of God and the welfare of those around you. But Jesus Christ tells you that the other part of your dream is also true. There will come trials and sorrows and death, and "after death the judgment." And, therefore, Jesus Christ proceeds as Joseph did to give you some advice. He advises you in the times of prosperity, when health is strong, and talents are bright, to prepare for that time of adversity. It is sure to come, and you had better prepare for it now. Look out one wise and good, who is able to allay all your fears, and whom you may trust to make provision for that dark future which may come. Then Pharaoh showed his wisdom and said, "Can we find such a man as this?" and he took Joseph, and put his ring upon his hand, and made him to ride in the second chariot, and caused it to be proclaimed throughout the land, "Bow the knee." And he made Joseph ruler over all the land of Egypt.

And I say the same of Jesus Christ. He is the One who can interpret your dream, and He will help you to make provision for that time of trial. And if you give to Him all your life, and strength, and powers, and talents; if you will entrust them all to Him whilst life is young and strength is strong, then you will not fear when the day of evil cometh, when you will have to render up your account. Then the dying-bed will be lightened, and the dark river will be a safe pathway, and the One you have trusted in the days of life will land you safely upon the eternal shore. Crown Him, crown Him Lord of lords and King of kings, and make Jesus Christ Ruler over your life to-day.

“ON THE SHORE.”

“ON THE SHORE.”

“And we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.”—ACTS xxi. 5.

THE holiday season is fast approaching, and many of us are looking forward shortly to going either into the country or to the seaside in search of recreation and of health. Let us this morning anticipate our holiday, and take a walk upon the seashore; and, with our Bibles in our hands, see if we cannot learn some lessons which may abide with us when we reach the sea.

What a new world opens out for us in the Word of God! The commonest objects seem to be transfigured by the glory of that Word—the grass beneath our feet, the very dust we shake from off us, the leaves that are whirled about on every side, everything seems to be a sacrament to remind us of the Lord Jesus Christ. God speaks to us in the clouds, and the very smallest pool reflects for us the azure sky. To-day, let us go forth upon the shore and gaze upon that great sweep of sand stretching away on every side. Take up a handful of sand and try to count the grains as they trickle through your fingers; you will give it up in despair before you have counted the hundredth part. Then cast your eye over the great sweep of sand, and your imagination will be overcome in your endeavour to estimate the possible number

of grains of which that immense stretch of sand is composed. And yet God gave this promise to Abraham—"As the sand of the seashore so shall thy seed be." But the sand speaks to me not only of *number* but of *variety*. At first sight there seems to be nothing more monotonous or uniform than that stretch of sand; and yet, if you examine it more carefully, no two grains are alike. You may take your stand upon the shore of Palestine, and you may allow your imagination to picture to you the origin of all those grains of sand which are lying round about you. Some of those grains have come from the great granite gates of the Nile, and have been swept down to the Mediterranean; others have been washed up on to the strand from the gates of the Atlantic; some have been torn from rocks by avalanche or storm, and ground down to the minute particles we behold by the ceaseless action of the waves. We have here, you may see, flakes of gold, and little shells, remnants of a bygone life. The sand, therefore, reminds us of that great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples; from north and south, from east and west. They have come from very diverse experiences on earth; but now they are united in their worship before the throne of God in heaven.

And again, that sand upon which you stand has been manufactured by storm and tempest. The grains of sand are not formed so much in some little glassy, quiet pool; they are formed amidst rocks and storms. And that great multitude which stand before the throne of God—it is through much tribulation that they have entered the kingdom of heaven. Those golden grains which make up the great multitude of heaven's host have been brought into their present condition of glory by trial, sorrow, and tribulation.

Oh, brother, then fret not if the storm beats upon you ; it may be to bring down some hard rock ; it may be to bring down some high nature which is exalting itself against God ; it may be to prepare you to take your place among the countless multitudes around the throne of God.

One more lesson we may learn as we stand by the sea-side—the power of little things. You see the storm and the tempest ; you see how it foams against the rock so ceaselessly, until the rock is undermined and falls with a crash into the water ; or else you see some triumph of man's endeavour and skill utterly unable to stand against those raging waves. But yonder waves, though tempestuous in the distance, as they approach the sandy beach come in very quietly, though curling and lashing the rocks as it were with disappointment. Still it is of no avail—they have to come up quietly ; and they come in, as you might say, almost whispering their allegiance to their recognized queen ; and then they have to retire backwards, subdued and overcome. "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further."

Ah, brethren, not all the triumph of human power and skill can keep those waves within bounds ; but when the waves of sin are tossing around the true child of God—around him whose soul has been trained by sorrow and trial, and who is content to fill a humble place and do the duty God has assigned to Him—when the waves of sin are tossing around him he will be enabled to say with confidence, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." Lessons like this every man can learn upon the seashore.

But now I would ask you to take your Bible in your hand, and you will learn four other lessons on the sea-

shore. The first is an Old Testament lesson : a lesson of terror and dismay at first, and yet to the child of God full of the truth of God and of God's power to save. In the fourteenth chapter of Exodus we read that the children of Israel have come out of Egypt ; they have been led by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night to the shore of the Red Sea ; but Pharaoh's host pursue after them, to take them back again to bondage in Egypt. And then we read how God bade the Israelites stand still that they might see His salvation. We read how with outstretched rod Moses made a way for the children of Israel to pass through the Red Sea ; and that as soon as they reached the other side "the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them." We read also in the thirtieth verse, that "the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians ; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore." Here you have exemplification of what we have just stated, namely, that the seashore is made up of the ruin of other things—the ruin of hard rocks ; and as we stand on the shore with Israel upon that day of triumph, we see the ruin of all proud things that have exalted themselves against God. Pharaoh, with his hard heart, his proud pride, and with all his host, lie dead upon the seashore. The enemy which has pursued the Israelites so long, the enemy that has kept them in bondage so cruelly, is dead—dead upon the seashore.

Ah, Christian ! there are some Egyptians you want to see dead upon the seashore : these Egyptians of your sins, which have been harassing you and keeping you in bondage ; you will only see them dead when you have gone through the waters, and stand on the seashore upon the other side.

If you want to see the death of those Egyptian sins, you must know what it is to stand still and see the salvation of God; you must know, too, what it is to go through waters of trial, and then you too will see your sins dead upon the seashore. Then you will loathe what hitherto you loved; you will pass through the Red Sea of the Saviour's blood, and will see your sins dead—dead upon the shore. We shall see these Egyptians no more. And yet we cannot but remember that the whole fulfilment is to be only in the future—not until we have gone through the flood, not until we have been through the waters of death, and landed upon the other side, shall we see every sin dead. You know, the sin which has been slain to-day seems to rise up again with a hydra's head to-morrow. But when we reach that shore, there will be no more sin; every Egyptian will be dead—dead upon the shore.

The other lessons to be learned upon the seashore are New Testament lessons, and they are more peaceful. The first of them you will see in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ is thronged by the multitude, and so He enters a little vessel in waiting for Him, and He thrusts out a little from the land. "Great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship and sat, and the whole multitude stood upon the shore." That was a grand seaside service, with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the Preacher, and on the seashore the listening multitude. You may learn great lessons, my brethren, from this chapter, especially with regard to open-air work. You will see how wonderfully illustrative was this discourse of our Lord Jesus Christ. He condescended to take for His illustrations the very

poorest objects—the very commonest things that happened round about Him. Yonder was a sower, sowing the seed ; immediately the Lord Jesus Christ pressed him into His service, that He might draw from that simple action the great truth of the sowing of the seed of the gospel by the wayside, in stony places, among thorns, and in the good ground. But though the illustrations were gathered from the common objects round about them, the lessons the Lord Jesus Christ taught were very deep, so deep that we have scarcely reached the bottom of them yet, even in this nineteenth century. You may study them again, and again, and again, and you will always find them fresh, always find in them some new truth.

May we learn as we go forth upon the shore not to despise the commonest objects ; let us try in everything to find something which may remind us of God, and of heaven, and of His truth. Oh that we may have eyes to see these lessons round about us on every side ! If we have but the hearts to love, and if we have but the mind illumined by God's Holy Spirit, we shall be enabled to take these lessons to ourselves. At the same time, let us learn that, while we do not despise these base things, and these common objects, there are truths, deep truths, which lie beyond them. We are, as Isaac Newton confessed he was, only children playing upon the shore ; and we shall find new lessons upon every side.

Another scene upon the shore you will find in the Gospel of St. John (chap. xxi.). In St. Matthew's Gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ was in the boat tossing up and down upon the waves, and the multitude were standing upon the shore ; but now He is on the shore, for His human life is done. The Lord Jesus has done His work, and is standing

on the shore waiting for those who are tossing in the boat. The Lord Jesus Christ had told His disciples to go before Him into Galilee, and they had gone; but the Master had not come, and they had nothing to eat. Judas, who held the bag for the apostolic company, had proved himself a traitor, and their funds were very low. Peter suggested that they should go a-fishing, as they had often done before and see what they could get. So they went forth, but they could catch nothing. Ah, brethren, I think the Master was just testing them to see whether they would trust Him for their breakfast. He had alway supplied their need before, they had never lacked in His company, but now they are in real want—and, mark you, the trial does not come until we are in real want—and so they would go a-fishing; but they could not catch anything.

Oh, Christian, when you have begun to walk by faith you cannot go back and walk by sight. Fishing without God's command may do very well for getting your breakfast when you are an ungodly man, but it will not do when you have begun to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find then that you have undertaken to do nothing that is not in accordance with His will: if you do, it will prove a failure, as this fishing was a failure. So when Jesus stood on the shore and said, “Children, have ye any meat?” they were obliged to say No; they had to confess their failure. Then Jesus said unto them, “Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.” And when they had brought them to land, what did they find? A fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread. It was all prepared. Oh, Christian, if only we could wait! We wait until we think it is almost hopeless,

and then we begin to strike out for ourselves ; it is just the last half-hour that tests the faith, and just the last half-hour that rewards the faith. Then the Master on the shore tests them : "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" "Yea, Lord," is the response ; "Thou knowest that I love Thee." "Then, Peter, feed My lambs ; tend My sheep." It seems as if the Master was there saying to Peter, If you had time to spare, were there not lambs to be fed? Were there not sheep to be attended to? What was this want of faith on your part which led you to go out fishing? Did you think I had forgotten you? Do you not see that this faithlessness of yours has just lost you an opportunity of feeding My lambs, feeding My sheep? Their Master tests them upon the shore. Ah, my brethren, the Master will be testing some of us, no doubt. There will be opportunities in the lodging we may occupy of doing work for the Master—of feeding His lambs, His sheep. There will no doubt be opportunities upon the very beach itself. We may give a tract to some child ; we may take part in some service ; we may speak a word or two to the servant in our boarding-house ; we may be feeding His lambs down upon the shore. But, alas, alas ! many Christians leave their religion behind them here in London, and seem to think when they go down for a holiday that they are off duty altogether. Jesus Christ said, "Lovest thou Me?" If you really loved Me, you would not only be doing something in the class at St. James's, but you would do something for Me on the seashore, and you would count it your greatest joy to be doing something for Me here as well as at your home. You would think it a great joy to spend two or three weeks there teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His love.

And now we come to the last scene upon the shore. The Apostle Paul is about to depart from Miletus, and he has sent for the elders of the Church at Ephesus. They accompany him to the ship, and there he parts from them. He reaches Tyre, and there meets with other disciples, with whom he tarries seven days, after which he must leave them again. And then we read, "And they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city : *and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.*"

Ah, brethren, the sea is a great divider. I suppose there are some in this church to-day who look upon the sea with terror and almost with hatred ; it is the sea which divides them from those they love. Some of you have gone down to the shore with those you love, and have seen the vessel which is to carry them away put out to sea ; and, as the distance increases between you and them, it seems as if half your soul has been taken from you. The sea in this aspect is only a picture of other things that divide.

My brother, you have had your boys and girls about you in your happy home ; you have watched over them in their tenderest years, and now the time has come for them to launch forth upon the voyage of life. Your sons go away from you, and your girls make new homes for themselves ; a great sea of separation seems to come between you, and then you wonder what their future will be. Happy the boy who, when he starts forth upon the ocean of school-life, has a father who will kneel down upon the shore of separation and commit him to God ! Happy the girl who starts life in her new home strengthened by a mother's counsel and cheered by a mother's blessing ! You may

go down to the shore, parent; you cannot go beyond it. There comes a time when the boy must go forth upon the ocean by himself, alone; there comes a time when the sea must divide you and your children; but you may go down to the shore and commit them to God. Ah, and sometimes there come the great surging waves of sorrow, into which a man must go by himself—alone; no one can enter into the sorrow with him; the heart knows its own bitterness, and the stranger cannot intermeddle with its joy. And then there comes the dark Gethsemane. We know that even Peter, James, and John could not go with their Master into Gethsemane. He must go alone. We must go alone; but oh, what a comfort to have some friend who can come down to the shore with us; and who, when he has gone with us as far as he can go, will kneel down on the shore and commit us to God! And then there comes the great ocean of death, when your friend can go no further with you. Hitherto you may have walked in company—you may have enjoyed the company of wife, husband, children; but through the waters of death you must go alone. Happy the man who has his friend upon the shore; happy the man who has such real Christian friends that, as he goes forth upon the waters of death, he leaves those behind who can, in perfect faith, commit him to God! Happy the husband who has been so bound in Christian love to his wife that, when he goes forth upon the waters of death, he sees her kneeling on the seashore and committing him in faith to God! Happy the wife, if she be the first to go, when she can leave her children safely in her husband's training, knowing that he will bring them up in the love of the Saviour! Christian, when you have passed through these waters you will find your enemies

dead upon the seashore. But you may first have to come to the brink of those waters to part with a friend, a child, a husband, or a wife ; if so, it will be your privilege to kneel down upon the shore and commit them to the Saviour, who, when they pass through the waters, will be with them.

DAVID'S SILVER VESSELS.

DAVID'S SILVER VESSELS.

“So was ended all the work that King Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord.”—
1 KINGS vii. 51.

“So was ended all the work that King Solomon made for the house of the Lord.” We have four grand conclusions in the Word of God—two in the Old Testament and two in the New. In Exod. xl. 33, when Moses finished the work of the tabernacle, and did everything as the Lord commanded him; here in 1 Kings vii. 51, when Solomon ended all the work for the temple in Jerusalem; in John xix. 30, when our Lord Jesus Christ exclaimed upon the cross, “It is finished;” and in Rev. xxi. 6, when, at the grand consummation of all things, He said, “It is done.” And we can see at once that the Old Testament passages are typical of the New Testament; for in Exod. xl. 33 you have the completion of obedience, which finds its grandest exemplification in the cry, “It is finished,” in John xix. 30, when the Son Himself was obedient unto death; and in 1 Kings vii. 51 you have the completion of fulfilment, when the movable tabernacle gives place to the fixed and perfect temple, prefiguring the time referred to in Rev. xxi. 6, when God Himself shall say, “It is done,” and the

transitoriness of earth will give place to the eternity of heaven. To this consummation we are looking forward at this Advent season. Calvary is finished, but we are still waiting for the bringing in of King David's dedicated vessels to complete the furniture of the temple of our King Solomon.

David, as we know, represents the King warring and gaining his dominion, and subduing all his foes; Solomon, the King as reigning in peace and prosperity over his loyal subjects; and between them they give us a fuller picture of the Kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ than we could otherwise have obtained. The great work of Solomon, the peaceful king, was the building silently but splendidly the temple for the Lord. This is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Solomon King to-day. He is building up living stones into a spiritual temple—"a habitation of God through the Spirit;" and I believe there are depths of instruction in the temple of Solomon into which the Church of Christ has not yet dived. With the Book of Leviticus and the Epistle to the Hebrews in our hands, the tabernacle has shone forth with many wondrous lessons as to the Divine provision for worship here in our wilderness journey; but I believe the temple of Solomon might give us many blessed lessons with regard to the Church in glory. To-night I would bring before you one point alone—the bringing in of the silver vessels which David the king had dedicated. It was the last act; when this was done, then Solomon's temple was complete.

In the first place, silver throughout Holy Scripture is typical of redemption. It is a noteworthy fact that, of the four chief metals—gold, silver, brass, iron—silver is the only metal which is not mentioned before the Flood, that

awful chastisement for a world's sin; but since that time it has been the chief medium of currency in the world, and God has consequently consecrated it to be a sacrament of the great purchase He has made for us in the blood of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, in Exod. xxx. 12, etc., it is laid down, "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord. . . . This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary. . . . The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls." Now, we know, from 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, that we were redeemed not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish;" and we know that this redemption-money must be brought by the hand of faith before we can be enrolled amongst the Israel of God, and so be permitted to fight for God here or to have our inheritance in the land of promise hereafter.

We know, further, that there can be no variation in the price. The rich cannot bring more, for what more can they bring? Will they heap up their subscription lists or offerings at the foot of the cross of Christ? or will they render the blood of the atonement more efficacious by mingling with it the tears of their repentance? And the poor shall not bring less; for, as the half-shekel was within the reach of every Israelite, so all may plead the blood of Christ. No poverty of any kind, in time, talents, education, position, can be an available excuse. In the matter of free-will offerings there might be, and there ought

to be, a difference; but in the matter of the atonement of the soul there can be no difference, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," and the same God over all is rich in mercy upon all them that believe. Now, it was expressly laid down in Exod. xxx. 16, "Thou shalt take the atonement-money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel." Accordingly, we have it laid down in Exod. xxxviii. 25-28 what they are to do with it. We have it ordained that out of the redemption-money they were to cast a hundred sockets of one talent weight, which were to form the foundation for the tabernacle in the sandy soil of the desert, and of the remainder they were to make hooks and fillets for the hanging of the curtains round the court of the tabernacle; so that every Israelite on entering the tabernacle would see the redemption-money down in the dust, forming the foundation of the place where he could meet with God, and then, lifting up his eyes, would see all the white linen surrounding the court hanging from the same redemption-money. So we see the price of our redemption, the blood of Jesus Christ, down in the dust of death upon Calvary, forming the foundation of all our communion with God; and then, lifting up our eyes, we see in the midst of the throne the Lamb as it had been slain, and from Him, exalted now on high, and pouring out His Holy Spirit, depends all our righteousness, and that holiness which "becometh Thine house for ever."

It is noteworthy how in the Bible the Holy Spirit always insists upon this fact, that the foundation of communion with God must be redemption. At first the

lesson is taught by type and picture, but gradually the spiritual truth becomes clearer and clearer. We have seen how, first of all, in the tabernacle of Exodus, that meeting-place of God and man was founded upon the hundred blocks of silver made out of the atonement-money of the children of Israel, paid by them upon their enrolment upon the national register. In due time the tabernacle gave way to the temple as the meeting-place between man and God ; and see how the same truth is insisted upon, only after a more spiritual manner. David persisted in numbering the people in spite of the remonstrances of Joab, who knew how distasteful the half-shekel tax would be ; and there is every reason to suppose that on that account, when the numbering was made, it was not universally paid, and therefore the plague broke out amongst them. David, therefore, went up to the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite and offered sacrifice to God, and so the plague was stayed, and then David said, " This is the house of the Lord God " (1 Chron. xxii. 1) ; and the temple of Solomon was built upon the spot where the sacrifice had redeemed Israel from the hand of the destroying angel.

Again, in Zechariah you have the rebuilding of the temple after the Captivity ; but before you have in chap. iv. the vision to encourage Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple, you have in chap. iii. the vision for Joshua the high priest, in which he is clothed with change of raiment, his iniquity is cleansed and his sin purged ; teaching us the same lesson, only in a still more spiritual manner—that there can be no communion with God unless there is first of all pardon of sin.

And, lastly, in 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, when we have learnt the truth that God dwells not in temples made with hands,

but that the human soul is the true meeting-place for God and man, the same truth, viz. redemption, leading to communion, is insisted on in the most spiritual way. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price." And the last time we hear of this half-shekel is peculiarly interesting, in Matt. xvii. 24. Those who collected this tribute for the temple came to Peter and said, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" Peter, knowing how thoroughly subservient to the Law Jesus was, at once answered, "Yes," and went to fetch the money; but Jesus anticipated him with the question, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?" Peter said, "Of strangers." Then said Jesus unto him, "Then are the children free," and so He claimed His own exemption because He was free from sin and needed no atonement-money. But in the next words He voluntarily pays the sum, not for Himself alone, but "for Me and thee," for Himself and Peter—a thing which no Israelite might do, for "no man might redeem his brother, or give unto God a ransom for him;" and by doing so He abrogated the redemption-money altogether. Oh, has He paid the atonement-money for thee, brother? Not for thee alone, mark—for thee separately, as disunited from Him; but "for Me and thee, as united to Me."

This, my brethren, is the first thought these silver vessels give me—they remind me of redemption; that I am a vessel purchased with His own blood.

But now, secondly, whence did David obtain them? If you will turn to 2 Sam. viii. 10, 11, you read, "Then Toi

sent Joram his son unto King David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him. . . . And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, . . . which also King David did dedicate unto the Lord, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued." Therefore these silver vessels were some of them taken in war, and some of them were free-will offerings given to David by those whom he had rescued from the hand of the oppressor; so of these it might be said, "These are David's spoil." And so, my brethren, it is with ourselves. We were redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and we yielded ourselves as free-will offerings to our great David, who had delivered us out of the hand of the enemy who oppressed us and had us in subjection; so that of us it might be said, "We are Jesus' spoil."

Now, these silver vessels, won and dedicated by his father David, did Solomon bring into the temple of the Lord; and although we read in 1 Kings x. 21 that "all King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, . . . none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon," and in ver. 27 that "the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones," yet these old battered silver vessels did he put among the treasures in the house of the Lord; in fact, though the temple had been built with the most magnificent splendour, yet it was not accounted really finished until these vessels had been brought in. And how wonderful is the lesson which this prefigures! David is the type of the Lord Jesus Christ as the conquering King—the King who has triumphed through sorrow and warfare; Solomon is the Prince of Peace, who builds the temple for which David has prepared. The day is coming when the true Solomon

will have completed the temple of living stones which He is now building as an habitation of God for all eternity; but that temple will not be accounted finished until every battered silver vessel won and dedicated by David shall be brought in and placed,—think of this, brother,—among the treasures of the house of the Lord. Yes, though there be angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim, you and I will be among the treasures of heaven; for we shall remind our King of His agony and bloody sweat, and how He won us on the field of battle wet with His own life's blood.

The study of these silver vessels is still more remarkable when we remember their future history. In 2 Kings xxv. 13, they were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; and then we read in Dan. v. 2, Belshazzar the king drank wine out of them to his gods; and these holy vessels, which had been dedicated to God's service and had been anointed with holy oil, were prostituted to the service of false gods. And we think of these desecrated vessels as we read the denunciations of the prophets: *e.g.* Jer. vi. 30, "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them;" or Ezek. xxii. 21, 22, "Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of My wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out My fury upon you." Alas, alas! that this should be so sadly true; that those who have been rescued by David's greater Son, and placed by the true Solomon amongst the treasures of the house of the Lord, should so fall away and be found in the Babylon of the world, filled with all kinds of iniquity,

and desecrated to the service of false gods! But in Mal. iii. 3 there is a ray of hope. The Lord shall come suddenly to His temple, "and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver;" sit not as an indifferent spectator, but patiently looking—intently, as some say—till He can see His image reflected in the glowing metal; "and He shall purify the sons of Levi"—yes, even these "joined ones," for they need it—"and purge them as gold and silver," with the most thorough purging; for the purging by fire is more thorough than the purging by water (cf. Numb. xxxi. 23): water only cleanses the exterior, fire purges through and through. And so shall they "offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness;" for this, according to Numb. vii. 85, is the purpose of these vessels. We shall present Him with the meat offering of righteousness, or bring the new wine of heaven's joy to the heart of our adorable Redeemer.

In the Book of Ezra, in which you have the account of the return from the Captivity, you have special notice taken of these silver vessels. In chap. i. 7-9, some are given into the hands of Sheshbazzar to take back to Jerusalem; others are given to Ezra, who, in chap. viii. 28, delivers them to the priests with this charge, "Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord." So are we entrusted with these holy vessels, and we must watch over them and keep them during this wilderness journey, until we give in our account at the heavenly Jerusalem. Let us see, then, that we are vessels meet for the Master's use; that upon every pot and pan in Jerusalem there be written, "Holiness to the Lord." Oh, ye vessels, freely have ye received—"good measure, pressed

down, and running over"—see that ye ever remember that ye have been redeemed by the precious blood, and that there is a place for you in the treasury above. "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels."

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